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THE EXPOSITOR'S TREASURY  
OF  
CHILDREN'S SERMONS





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# GENESIS

## GENESIS

### THE FOOTPRINTS OF GOD

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'—  
GENESIS I. 2.

'In the beginning God *created* the heaven and the earth.' There is a difference between 'creating' and 'making'. If you look at the third verse of the second chapter, it says 'God created and made'. 'Creating' and 'making' are not the same thing. A carpenter *makes* a box; a carpenter does not *create* a box. God created the carpenter. God created his mind to think about the box; the iron, to make the hinges; and the tree, to make the wood.

But what is 'creating'? Supposing now you could think of something; and because you think of it, there it is, in a moment. Supposing in your mind you could think of a star, and there is the star! Because you thought of it, there it is.

I cannot say exactly what 'creating' is. It is something like that. God is such a great God.

There was a very wise man, who lived many, many hundreds of years ago. His name was Simonides. People came to him, because he was one of the wisest men that ever lived; and they said to him, 'What is God, Simonides?' He said, 'Give me a day to think about it'. They came to him the next day, and said, 'What is God, Simonides?' He said, 'Give me a week to think about it'. After a week had passed, they came to him again, and said, 'What is God, Simonides?' He said, 'Give me a month to think about it'. They came again to him at the end of a month, and they said, 'What is God, Simonides?' He said, 'Give me a year to think about it'. At the end of a year, they came to him, and said, 'What is God, Simonides?' And he said, 'I am no nearer than when I first began to think about it. I cannot tell what God is.'

But I will tell you what an Arab said. Somebody came to an Arabian, in his tent in the desert, and said to him, 'How do you know there is a God?' He said, 'How do I know whether it was a man or a camel that went by my tent last night?' How did he know which it was? 'By the footprints.' The marks in the sand showed whether it was a man's foot or a camel's foot that had passed his tent. So the Arab said, 'That is the way I know God. I know Him by His footprints. They are His footprints that are all around me.'

We are going to think about 'God's footprints' in the first chapter of Genesis—the marks of God's power.

I. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and

the earth.' When was 'the beginning'? No one can answer that question. How long is it since Adam lived? It was 4004 years from Adam to Christ. How long is it since Christ? 1874 years. Add them together, and you will find it is 5878 years since God made Adam. Was that 'the beginning'? Not a bit; that has nothing to do with it. 'In the beginning'—perhaps that was hundreds of thousands and even millions of years ago—'in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'. God's *arranging* and *making* it is what we are going to think about at present. But when God 'created' it, brought it out of nothing, I do not know how long it was; nobody can tell that. Do you understand the difference? The first chapter of Genesis is about God arranging and making it as we have it now

II. On the *first day*, God made 'light'; on the *second day*, 'the firmament'; on the *third day*, 'earth and water, herbs and trees'; on the *fourth day*, 'sun, moon, and stars'; on the *fifth day*, 'fishes, fowls, and birds'; and on the *sixth day*, 'man'. Did the greatest thing come first or last? Did it always go on improving? Did God make things that live first, or things without life? Things without life. What sort of life did He make first? Vegetable life, the life of herbs and trees; then, animal life, the life of animals; then, what life next? Human life. So it got up higher and higher. Things inanimate, without life; then, things with vegetable life; then, things with animal life; then, human life: always higher, and higher, and higher. Man goes lower, and lower, and lower; down, and down, and down; God gets higher, and higher, and higher; up, and up, and up!

Another thing. Did God ever make anything till He had first made the things that thing would want? What would herbs and trees want? earth, light, water. They were all made before He made the herbs and trees. What would the cattle want? They would want grass, and God made grass before He made cattle. What did we want? Everything to serve us—all made for us—before we were born.

III. God never made anything till He had first made what that thing would want. Remember that all through life. God will never put you anywhere till He has provided for you all that you will want to be happy there, and to do your duty there.

There was a philosopher, a great man in Aberdeen, his name was Dr. Beattie: he had a little boy who was just able to read, about five years old. Dr. Beattie wanted to teach his little boy about God; and how do you think he did it? He went into the

garden, and in a corner, with his finger, he made in the ground the letters of his little boy's name; and when he had made those marks in the ground, he put some mustard and cress in those lines. About ten days after that, his little boy came running into his study one day, saying, 'Father, father, there is my name coming up in my garden'. He could just read it. The father said, 'Nonsense! nonsense! There cannot be your name in the garden. Don't talk like that.' He said, 'Father, come and see'. He took him out, and there was his name in the garden. The father said, 'There is nothing remarkable in that, it all came by chance'. The little boy pulled his father by the coat into the house, and said, 'I do not think it came by chance, father. It could not come by chance.' The father said, 'Do you think somebody put it there, then?' 'Yes, I do, father,' said the little boy, 'I think somebody must have put it there.' Then his father began to tell him about God. 'That is just the way with you,' he said. 'Somebody *must* have made you. You are more wonderful than that mustard and cress.'

IV. On the sixth day the Lord said of everything that He had made, 'Behold, it is very good'. When did God begin to bless? On what day? Did you ever notice? After He had made the fishes, and the cattle, and man, He began to bless; not before. At the very end of creation, He said it was '*Very good*'. Then God was quite pleased, was He? Is God quite pleased when He looks down on this church? Is He quite pleased with you and me? Not quite. Has not He very great reason to be displeased? Why was God quite pleased then? Can you remember any time, after that, when God looked down upon this earth, and was quite pleased? I think He was quite pleased when Jesus Christ came out of the water, out of Jordan. What did God say? 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am *well pleased*.' Do you think, in the four thousand years between, God had ever said that? Never! He was quite pleased then, because there was no sin in Jesus Christ.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### NIGHT

'The darkness He called night.'—GENESIS 1. 5.

THERE are people who are afraid of the darkness of the night, who go in fear along a country lane in the dark, and don't like to be alone in a room of their own house without a light. They must fancy that God goes to sleep in the night, and cannot take care of them as He does in the daytime. There are even people so wicked as to talk to children of Bogie, or the Black Man, who may come to do them hurt in the darkness. I hope *you* never tell such tales to your little brother or sister, because to tell a lie which frightens some one is the worst kind of lying. You know that God never slumbers nor sleeps. He makes us sure of that by the things which He does in the night. He has made many flowers to bloom in the darkness—the evening primrose, the great water-lily, the convolvulus, and a great number of other

flowers. One of the largest flowers is called the Queen of the Night. You may have noticed some evening the change which came over a field where one of our English flowers grows in abundance—catchfly, as it is called. Before sunset not a flower was to be seen, but when the sun went down the field became white with them. Then there are more butterflies on the wing in the darkness than there are in the daylight. It is true, the scientific men don't call them butterflies, but you and I may very properly call them butterflies of the night. Many caterpillars feed by night, and some of the most richly coloured beetles are asleep all day and busy in the darkness. One of the sweetest songsters among the birds sings by night. And one reason why flowers open in the dark, and butterflies sip their nectar in the night is, I believe, that you should be sure that God is not slumbering or sleeping, but keeps watch over us all by night as well as by day.

Have you ever thought that night is just the shadow of the world, which stretches out on the side of the earth opposite to the sun, like a great conical cap, thousands of miles broad at its base, but tapering till it is no bigger than half-a-crown, and at last until it is as fine as a camel-hair brush? Sometimes the shadow sweeps across the moon, and we say that there is an eclipse of the moon. There are people who are frightened when they see the moon eclipsed. They are terrified by a shadow—the shadow of the world on which they live!

How strange it would be to live in a world which had no shadow! And there are such worlds. They are lighted by two suns, and the inhabitants may see one sun rising while the other is setting. One wonders whether the people who live in such a world know as much as we do of the vastness of the dominion of God. For it is to night that we owe our knowledge of the greatness of the universe. If we had never seen the stars, how little we should know of the power and glory of God! It is when we are being swept round through the shadow of the earth that we perceive that God has thousands and ten thousands of other suns than ours, and millions on millions of other worlds, which He is keeping and guiding through the immensity of space as a shepherd leads his flock. Think of that when you read or repeat the twenty-third Psalm. The Lord who is your Shepherd is the Shepherd of myriads of worlds, and He thinks of the little flowers which open in the dark, and of the butterflies which flutter over them, drinking honey in the stillness of the night. Why should you be afraid of darkness, or of anything, since the mighty God watches over you through day and night, and life and death, and for ever?—JOHN A. HAMILTON, *The Wonderful River*, p. 193.

### SELF-RESPECT

'God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.'—GENESIS 1. 27.

THERE are several reasons why we should cultivate self-respect.



I. In the first place, we are made after the image of God: God has given us, what He had denied to the beasts, a free will and a divine soul. We are partakers of God's nature. He breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, and man became a living soul. He stood on his feet, and something in himself told him that there was a God above him who had made him. The power in you to believe in God is the soul. The religious instinct which makes you turn to God, pray to God, trust in God, is the breath of God within you, the little spark of the Divine Nature lodged in your breasts.

The beast and bird do not think of God, because they have no souls. They go through their allotted course, do what their instincts tell them to do, without a thought of their Creator, any more than a clock, or a railway engine, or a steamboat has of its maker. But with you it is quite different. The little child looks up to God, and can love and trust Him. It believes in Him without an effort. And this is because of the soul within, which comes from God, and turns to God.

II. You were made in the image of God. Now what does that mean?

(1) First it means that you have spirit. God is a spirit. The animal when it dies ceases to be. But your spirit can live without a body. And at the Resurrection your bodies will be raised spiritual, that is, they will be able to do that which only spirits can do now, and go where only spirits can go now.

Then again, God is eternal. And you are born to eternity. There never will be a time when you will not be. Thousands of years will pass, but you will still exist.

Then again, God is a Creator. He makes things out of nothing. He calls into existence things that were not. We to some extent partake in His creative power; we have a gift in us called the imagination, by means of which we can call up out of nothing forms that are not, and by various means give them a sort of actual existence. For instance, a painter, or a sculptor, forms an idea in his head, and he carries it out in a picture or a statue. A musician creates a beautiful melody, and gives it existence by singing it, and playing it on the piano. Another invents a story, and calls up all sorts of persons and scenes and creates all sorts of incidents and situations, and in a book gives them a sort of real existence. Now of course these are all very inferior sorts of creation, but, no doubt, after the Resurrection we shall be able to create as God creates, and one of the delights of eternity will be the delight of creating.

You see, we are partakers of the Divine Nature, sons of God, made in the image of God. Is not that a great reason for respecting ourselves?

(2) But there is another reason.

Jesus Christ has redeemed us. Each one of us is ransomed by His precious blood. For our sakes, because He loved and esteemed us, He took human nature upon Him.

(3) And once more.

You will live for ever, in body and soul. Your bodies will be raised, and made glorious, like unto Christ's glorious body, no more to see corruption. Now you receive your bodies for a little while. They grow, and become old, and decay. But you will receive your bodies again once more. You will wake up after Christ's likeness, endowed with strength, health, youth, and glory. No more shall they wax old, no more suffer pain, no more languish with want. They shall retain ever the bloom of youth.

It was a custom among the ancient Romans for a son to bear, hung round his neck, a piece of silver or gold, on which was stamped his father's image. It was thought a great honour thus to be adorned. There was a family illustrious for its virtues and the greatness of the great men it had reared. This was the family of the Scipios. At last there came a young Scipio, who forgot the dignity of his family, and the nobility of the name he bore, and disregarded the example of his father. He behaved so badly and unworthily, that the Senate of Rome decreed that the seal of his father should be taken from him, as he was unworthy to bear his father's image and name on his bosom.

A Christian bears the image of his Father, and Redeemer, and great Example, not on his breast, but in his heart; not stamped on silver or gold, but written deeply in the fleshy tables of his heart. He is bound to behave as a Christian, to walk worthy of his heavenly Father, and to follow the example of his Saviour. If he does not he forfeits his right to be called a Christian.

#### MAKING THE BEST OF EVERYTHING

'And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.'—GENESIS I. 31.

THERE are two ways of looking at everything and two ways of speaking of everything. One way is to see all the bad there is in it, and to speak of it, and so to find fault with everything and everybody. The other way is to see what good there is in it, and to speak of it to others. This is God's way. When He had created the sun, moon, stars, and the earth, and all that in them is, He 'saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good'. Now which is the better way, to find the good in everything, or to find the bad in everything? Let us see which is better.

You will see the importance of this question when you think how easy it is to form the habit of finding fault or of finding good in everything. We fall easily into habits,—into the habit of carrying our hands in our pockets, of throwing our caps down anywhere, of biting the finger-nails, of doing everything we do in a certain way and not in another way,—and so we fall into the habit of seeing spots, defects, wrongs, whatever is bad, or into the habit of seeing the good there is in everything, and speaking of it. We are creatures of habit, and when a habit is once formed it is hard breaking it. This we all know who

have tried to break off a bad habit. Another thing I want you to remember. It is this: that as we form good or bad habits, we shall be happy or miserable. But that is not all: as we form good or bad habits, we make others happy or miserable. And this is not all: just as we form good or bad habits, we please or displease God. Remember these things.

But you say that there are so many things wrong that we cannot help finding fault with them. No doubt if you had looked out on the world which God made, at the time it was finished, you would have found many things to find fault with,—the weather, the rain and snow, the heat and cold, the snakes and flies, and other things too numerous to mention—but God called them all ‘very good’. And now we have plenty of things to fret at and find fault with, if we will only form the habit of doing so. But there are reasons why we should make the best of everything; and we will tell you what they are, that you may form the habit of looking always on the bright side.

I. Your own good should lead you to make the best of everything. To pick out flaws, to see defects, to find all the ugly and bad things, and to dwell on them, is not good for your own soul. There is nothing cheering and ennobling in it. If you have ten apples, nine of them good and one bad, it is folly for you to fret over the one bad apple so as to lose the good of eating the nine sweet apples. So, if there were nine good things and one bad, make the most of the nine and let the one go. Or, if there were nine bad and only one good, it were wise to make the best of the one and let the nine go. What is the use of spoiling the good because of the bad? Our own happiness depends on our passing by the bad and seeing what is good. This is one reason why we should make the best of everything. When I was a boy my mother told me a story about a woman who had a great many troubles and hardships and trials, more than any one of us have ever had to bear. Everything seemed to go against her; yet she was one of the happiest beings that ever lived. Others, who did not have half so much to try them as she had, were miserable and fretful and fault-finding. What made her so happy in her poverty? This: she saw the good in everything, and her loving heavenly Father’s hand behind everything; and so she used to say when any new trouble came to her: ‘It is all for the best; it is all for the best’. She got out of everything all the good there was in it, and let the bad go. But if she had looked at the bad and talked of it, she would have made herself miserable indeed. She would have been fretful, cross, fault-finding, unhappy, as miserable as some of us make ourselves over our little troubles.

A mother told me the other day that her boy had once fallen from a tree and cut his face, and that for a long time she had mourned over the scar that was left, until one day it flashed into her mind how ungrateful it was to grieve over the scar when her boy had not been killed by the fall. After that she

never saw the scar without joy that her child had been spared. She at first looked on the dark side, then on the bright side, and where before she had sorrow, now she has gladness of heart. May we not find joy by looking on the bright side of things?

II. The good of others should lead us to make the best of everything. We help to make others happy or miserable. We ought to do what we can to make them happy, and we shall, if we look on the bright side of things. But if we tell over to them every pain, ache, and trouble we have, we shall make ourselves and them miserable. If we, on the other hand, see the good things God has done for us, and speak of them, and smile through our tears, and feel and say that all is for the best, we shall fill their lives with joy and gladness. We shall make them happy.

We want you, then, to make the best of everything. Say with God: ‘Behold, it was very good.’—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons for Children*, p. 35.

## THE BIRD AND THE KING

### GENESIS II.

ALL the tears in the world have their spring in an unholy heart. If we had the hearts which God wished us to have, there would be no tears. It is because we have lost these hearts that we have tears to shed.

When God made our first parents, He gave them a heart without tears. He said to them, Do not spoil it, nor lose it, for the heart that will come into its place will be filled with tears. This heart is sometimes called in the Bible *the living soul*; sometimes *the image of God*; but to-day we shall call it *the holy heart of Eden*.

I wish I could tell you how beautiful this heart was. There is nothing I could mention to be compared with it for beauty. Not gold or silver, or crystal or diamonds. It was more beautiful than flowers, or stars, or moons, or suns, or summer skies. Beautiful is a green hill-side all sprinkled over with daisies and buttercups, and white lambs feeding on the tender grass. Very beautiful is the wide blue sea, with ships sailing on its bosom, and little children playing on its yellow shore. But far more beautiful was the tearless heart which God gave to Adam and Eve in Eden. It was beautiful like His own—a heart like the heart of Him who has made all beautiful things.

Alas! our hearts are no longer like the heart of God. The holy heart of Eden has been lost. In our hearts now there are wrong wishes, wrong thoughts, wrong tempers, wrong deeds. None of these were in the holy heart of Eden. There was nothing bad in that beautiful heart. If that heart had been kept, there would have been no sadness in the world. There would have been neither tears nor death in the world. But now the world is full of both tears and death. Always, over all the world, some are dying, and others are weeping, and many are doing wicked things. And death and tears and wickedness are all so many proofs that the happy heart of Eden has been lost.

You can see by this that there is something for which both old and young have cause to weep. The holy, beautiful heart, which God intended us to have, has been lost. And we can never be truly happy, we can never be truly good, till we get it back again. Without it we can never see Jesus, nor be like Him, nor be with Him in heaven. It is worth more than the whole world for us to get it back again.

Jesus is very earnest about this lost heart. He did not merely speak about it, He came from heaven to win it back for you. He died on the bitter cross that we might have it back. Listen to a simple parable:—

The king of a warm and sunny country had a little bird, which he loved and kept in a garden he had planted for itself. Every morning the little bird rose out of its nest among the leaves, and went up through the balmy air, singing the sweetest songs, up to the king's palace on the mountain top, and was fed from the king's hand, and spent the day with the king. But the bird grew tired of its happiness—the foolish, foolish bird!—and one morning it turned its head from the palace, and from the bread in the king's hand. And it bade farewell to the garden, and to the nest among the leaves. And it flew away, and away, and away, through the clouds, and over hills, and fields, and seas, until it lost sight of the sunny land where its garden lay, and came to a land of winter, where the ice was mountains high, and snow lay always on the ground.

And there, in that cold country, the little bird grew cold. It could sing its pleasant songs no more. No kind king was there to reach out his warm hand with crumbs of bread. It was perishing with cold and hunger. Its little heart grew cold, and it fell upon the snow, and lay there. And to look at, the bird was frozen, and stiff, and dead.

That night the loving stars, looking down from the sky, saw the little bird on the snow; and as their own light glanced back to them from the frozen feathers, they cried, 'Alas, for the beautiful bird!'

Next morning the angels of God, who go to and fro through the earth to do His will, came to the country where the little bird was lying; and they stooped to the ground and felt the bird, and it was cold; and they put their hands above its heart, and that was cold. And they said, 'Alas, for the beautiful bird! and alas, for him to whom the bird belonged! and alas, for the chilled heart of the poor bird, into which the warm life shall never enter again!'

But while the angels were lamenting, they heard a voice behind them saying, 'My bird was lost, and is found. Give the bird to Me.'

And the angels lifted up their eyes, and beheld Him from whom the voice came. And they bowed their heads before Him. For He was their own king, and the king of the warm and sunny land. He had followed His bird over mountains and seas. The people of the cold country had used Him cruelly. He was all covered with wounds and blood. But

He took the dead bird from the angels into His wounded hands, and put it into His bosom, close to His warm heart. And the heat went from His heart into the heart of the bird, and it began to breathe, and then to stir, and then to chirp. And then the king fed it with crumbs, and then He carried it back to the warm country, and to the garden He had planted for it, and to its nest among the leaves. And soon it was once more going up, morning after morning, as in the former time, up through the balmy air, singing its sweet old songs, up to the palace gate, and to the company of its king. The happy, happy bird!

I think you know what this parable means. When our first parents had the holy heart of Eden they could sing the sweetest songs, and their souls went up like a bird to the very gate of heaven, and they were fed from the open hand of God. But when they lost that heart, they lost the songs too, and fed no longer from the open hand of God, and went up no more to the gate of heaven. They departed from God, and from Eden, and went far away, through the mists and clouds of evil, into a land where there was neither God nor gate of heaven. They went into the land of sin. And sin froze up their songs; and put a chill into their hearts, and tears into their eyes. And there they would have miserably perished; but the loving Jesus came after them, sought them out, and found them, and took them up in His arms, and put the holy heart of Eden into their souls again. And Jesus is offering this heart to every boy and girl, and to every man and woman in the world. And He has commanded me to offer it, in His name, to every one of you. The very youngest of you may have back again the holy heart of Eden. Only try to understand how Jesus loves you; only cry to God to help you to love Him in return. Love to Jesus is the lost heart come back again. And when it is once back, all badness shall go away from you, all tears shall be dried up. You will be happy, like our first parents in the Garden of Eden. You will be holy, like the holy Jesus Himself. And if you accept His gracious offer, He will give you songs of heaven to sing, and open heaven's gate for you, and admit you into the presence of His Father, and give you bread of heaven to eat, and dry up all your tears.

I do not know whether you have quite understood all I have been saying. There are some things some of you may not be able to understand for a long time to come. And perhaps, after all I have said, you do not yet understand how you should have tears to be dried up. For you are young. Your eyes are bright, and your cheeks are brown with health. Your limbs are light, and your hearts are full of joy. But the time will come, when your hearts will be familiar with losses, and you will know, as well as we who are old, that every child of man has tears to shed.

You appear to my eyes, at this moment, a stream of young and eager life. But the stream is moving onward, to manhood, to womanhood, to old age. The yellow locks must grow dim, and the black locks



be turned to grey. And you will need a staff to support your steps. And then you must bid farewell to old age too. And it will be Eternity. And *then?* Ay, that is a main question—what *then?*

A few years ago, if those who love you had looked into the faces of all the children in this land, they would not have seen one of yours. A few years hence, and yourselves may look for some who love you to-day, and you will not find them. And in a few years after that, if an angel were to come down and look into every face in England, in Scotland, in the whole world, he would not see one face, of all the faces before me, among them all. It would make me happy to know that he should find them when he went back to heaven, if he were searching among the faces there.

How happy we should be, if we who are here to-day were all to meet in heaven! We should not then need to read about Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob: we should see them and speak with them face to face. And we should see Joseph, who had the coat of many colours; and Moses, who was cradled in the river; and David, who slew Goliath; and Elijah, who went up in the fiery chariot; and Daniel, who was in the den of lions; and the three children who were in the furnace, and Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Peter and James, and John and Paul. We should also see those holy women of whom the Bible tells: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, the mother of John; the sisters of Lazarus, and the widow who got back her son. And what is better than all, we should see Jesus Himself, and He would kindly look upon us and graciously speak to us, and take us with Him 'whithersoever He goeth'. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 119.

### THE LIVING SOUL

'Man became a living soul.'—GENESIS II. 7.

WHAT a wonderful thing the soul is! You cannot see it: you cannot hear it: you cannot touch it. Yet you know it is there. You do not want any proof that you have a soul. You are as sure of that as that you have a body. It tells you itself.

Now I think I am wrong, after all, in saying that you have a soul. Ought I not to say, you *are* a soul? Is not the soul really *yourself*? In truth, my children, it is the soul that has a body, not the body that has a soul; for the soul is greater surely than the body, and will last when the body is laid aside in death. Think how you speak of some one who is dead. You say, 'He is gone'. But the *body* is not gone. That is lying on the bed, and you can see it and touch it. It is there still. So when you say 'He is gone,' you mean by 'He' his soul, not his body. You speak quite rightly and truly then.

And so the Bible speaks; for it does not say 'God gave man a living soul,' but man '*became* a living soul'. The soul was himself.

Now I am going to talk about the soul, and to try

to help you to understand something about it. But, you must remember, it is a very difficult subject, and you must attend very closely, or you will not understand me.

The soul—what is it? Nay, I cannot tell you that. I can no more tell you what the soul is than what God is. 'God is a spirit,' and the soul is a spirit too. That is all I can tell you about the nature of the soul, and it does not help you much.

But a spirit is like the wind. Though we cannot see it we can see what it does. We can see the trees bend, or the leaves tremble, or the clouds sail by, or the smoke blow one way, and we know the wind does it. So when you think, or remember, or hope, or intend, or love, or hate, or wish, or fear—what is it which does so? The soul. Yes, all the important things you do the soul does, as we saw at first. So, though we cannot see the soul, we can see a great many things which show us it is there.

Now I am going to try to explain to you a very difficult matter—how and why the soul acts. You must listen very attentively.

I. First of all, you can all understand that God has put in your soul a great many different feelings and inclinations. You know what is meant by being *inclined* to anything. It means that something is drawing you to it. Love, hatred, desire, hope, joy, anger—these are some of the feelings and inclinations you find in your soul.

II. Then, next, God has also set you in the midst of a great many things which stir and move and draw out these feelings and inclinations. You can all see that, as God has put love in your souls, so He has set you where there are persons and things to love. As He has put hatred in your souls, so He has set you where there are persons and things to hate. And so with all the rest.

But in all these feelings you may be either right or wrong. If you love the persons and things you ought to love, and love them neither too much nor too little; and hate the things you ought to hate, and hate them neither too much nor too little, then you are right. But if you love and hate the wrong things, or love or hate the right things too much or too little, then you are wrong. And so with all other feelings.

But now we sorely want a guide. How are we to tell which feeling is right and which wrong? or what is the proper thing which ought to call out any feeling? or how far any feeling ought to be allowed to go? Here God has helped us. For He has set in our souls two things which are meant to rule over, and keep in order, the rest. These two things are Reason and Conscience. Reason helps us to find out and understand what sort of things are right and wrong, and Conscience makes us feel whether the very thing we are doing, or thinking of doing, is right or wrong.

Now all this is, I know, very hard for you; but some of the older ones among you have, I hope, followed me so far. And now we will take an

example to make it plainer. A little boy is tempted to tell a lie. Fear drags him towards the lie. Hope of escaping punishment, and desire to be thought well of, both pull him in the same direction. On the other side, a fear of God's anger holds him back. And then Reason tells him a lie is very hateful to a God of truth, and reminds him that the devil is called the father of lies; and Conscience makes him very uncomfortable in the thought of doing so wrong a thing. Now who or what shall decide? Ah! there is something yet in the soul to be spoken of. The Will. *That* must decide. God has given that boy, and all of us, free will. We can choose; we are not forced. I hope the boy would choose to be on the side of Reason and Conscience. But he must choose.

Now, beyond all I have spoken of, there are two powers at work in the soul, of which I have said nothing, because they are not part of the soul, but come from outside, as it were, to visit it. One power is on the side of the right, and that is the Holy Spirit of God; and the other is on the side of the wrong, and that is the devil. You must not forget this. And you must not forget that the power of the Holy Spirit is far greater than the power of the devil, and is on your side, if you are on the side of the right.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 29.

### FLOWERS AND THEIR USES

'The Lord God planted a garden.'—GENESIS II. 8.

I WANT to point out to the children what indeed some grown-up people may have missed—the beautiful touch which occurs in the Bible's story of the world's creation; how 'God planted a garden'. It is in the midst of the chapters that tell how, with one creating word, God spake the vast heavens into being, and the round world; how He said, 'Let light be,' and behold light was! 'God planted a garden,' and with loving care decked it with flowers. A word called light into being; but God took pains about the garden. There is a beautifully human and tender atmosphere in that.

God cares so much for the flowers, He *must* be kind and gentle and patient. Have you not noticed that the people who love flowers very much are generally very nice people. We all love flowers, don't we?

A wise man once said that the very fact that the world is full of flowers shows that God must be love; because only love *could* have made, *would* have made loveliness. I suppose we *could* live without flowers, just as there *can* be homes without kisses. But how poor and barren the world would be!

There were not always flowers. When those plants whose fossils make our coal waded in the air, there were *no* flowers in the world; for those plants were flowerless. Spring came once a year, but it had no smile of flowers such as now it weaves around the world, nor any fragrance of coming summer.

God put flowers in the world and so helped to

prepare the world for His children; not until long after God had made flowers did He send men into the world. And now flowers are everywhere; on the moorland, by the stream-side, in the high Alps, in the lowly dales, within the Arctic Circle where they measure their summer by hours, and in the Tropics where there is wonderful brilliance of colour. And every flower is a marvel wherever you find it, and the more you look at it the more perfectly you see its charm, fashioned more wonderfully than any gem.

Flowers have no speech nor language, but their music goes through all the world, and their fragrance to the end of the earth. Flowers are nowhere out of place; I do not know that I can say that of anything else. In a sickroom *how* they brighten the place, and ease the heart of the weary yet patient sufferer!

Do you know how the rose has come to be a rose? Why, by being put to school; once it was a very poor blossom indeed, but the gardeners saw what could be made of it; so they have taught it and fed it, and with great care they have made it what it is to-day, and in your garden and mine the roses of to-day are as different from the old roses, as Cinderella in her satin robes was different from Cinderella in her poor kitchen.

And I daresay, if there are any roses with bad hearts (as I suppose there are), that they, coming across some of their old relatives, would in their pride turn as back from them and think very little of them indeed. But most of the roses have really lovely hearts. How do I know? Because they are always pouring out their hearts in fragrance, giving their best.

I sometimes wonder if I were blind what flowers I should like in my garden. Musk? Yes. Forget-me-not? No! What would be the use of it? But roses would be as beautiful to blind people almost—for their fragrance is so various and so subtle—almost as beautiful as they are to us, who have eyes to see their lovely forms.

Now, what is the moral of this? I never yet have had the impertinence to tack on morals to flowers. Why? Because a flower is its own moral. If you care for flowers they do you good—if you love them and tend them, they will improve you.

Dean Hole, of Rochester, who has written one of the most interesting books on flowers that ever has been written, tells strange stories in that book about his roses. One story that he tells is this,—that in Nottingham the workmen have in recent years learnt to love roses very, very much. One of Dean Hole's parish visitors was, when he was Rector in Nottingham, calling one cold winter on a very poor family indeed. She saw how thin the bed was (a man would not have noticed it); *her* eyes saw that there were no blankets, whereupon she said, 'What! didn't I give you some blankets only last week?' The poor woman said, 'Yes, ma'am, you did'; so the visitor said, 'Surely! surely you haven't pawned them already!' and the cottager said, 'No, ma'am, but the weather is so cold

that Tom,' her husband, 'took them to wrap up the rose-house at night to keep the frost out, and please ma'am we are as hot as can be in bed, and oh! we don't feel the loss of it.' Thus do those people down at Nottingham love their roses. And I never found anyone who loved flowers very much who was not very much the better. That is the moral.

God planted a garden, let us tend the flowers.—  
BERNARD T. SNELL, *The All-Enfolding Love*, p. 13.

### A LOST RIVER

'And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.'—GENESIS II. 10.

In the highest part of the island of Eigg, on the west coast of Scotland, you can see, beneath the hard black lava that fills it, traces of an old valley through which once flowed a noble river. The valley was scooped out of the rock by the action of the water for untold ages. At the bottom of the valley you can see pebbles that had been carried long distances and rubbed smooth against each other. And mixed with them you will find bits of fossil pine-trees, of a kind long extinct, which once grew on the banks of the river. Farther westward, there is an island that has on its surface another small fragment of the old river-bed, filled up, as on the island of Eigg, with lava. Only in these two places do you see traces of the ancient river. All the rest of its course has vanished, for the land over which it flowed has long ago been worn away by the sea. The lava which filled up the bed of the river was poured into it at a later period from some great burning mountain in the neighbourhood that has disappeared. From the marks left behind, you can infer that it was a great river, bigger than any river now in Britain. It flowed far westward into the Atlantic, over land where there is now only the wide deep sea.

That is a very romantic story, written on one page of the ancient stone story-book of our own country. But the Bible tells you a more wonderful story still of a lost river. God planted at the beginning, when man came into the world, a lovely garden eastward in Eden; and through it flowed a large river, which divided itself into four branches, and watered every part of the garden. You know that in the East, wherever a river flows, there all kinds of beautiful trees and flowers grow upon its banks, and the desert is changed into a garden. The bright verdure of Egypt is created by the Nile; and all the splendid gardens of fruit-trees around Damascus have been formed by the waters of the Abana. In like manner, it was the waters of its great river that preserved all the rich green life and freshness of the garden of Eden, and helped our first parents to fulfil their task of dressing and keeping it.

But through the disobedience of Adam and Eve the garden vanished. The river of Eden became a lost river, in some such way as the old geological river in the west of Scotland. Perhaps the Deluge, helped in this region by some great volcanic eruption that broke up the fountains of the deep, buried the

first home of man under the waters of the Indian Ocean, and a flaming sword kept the secret.

The garden has never been revisited, nor has a trace of its existence been found. No more can the race of man wander on the banks of the lost river, or drink of its waters, or dream under the shadow of its fragrant bowers. But what man has lost by his sin God's grace has restored, and it will never more be lost. The second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is the Keeper of the heavenly Paradise. His blood has quenched the flaming sword that guarded its gates; and now they are thrown wide open for all who have faith and love to enter in. Through them a glimpse is given to us of the river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding, not like the old river of Eden from earthly springs that are apt to dry up, but from the throne of God and of the Lamb, so that it can never cease to flow.

But, in order to get to the river of life now, we must go through the river of death. Every one has to pass through this dark river. The old Egyptians carried their dead in an ark or boat across the Nile, from the east to the west banks, where the place of burial was; and our pagan forefathers believed that, when they died, a silent boat came, with muffled oars, to take them across the western sea to a far island under the sunset rays. These ideas, and the many expressions in our hymns and sermons about crossing a flood when we die, are probably memories of the far-off time when the deep waters engulfed the Eden from which the human race had come, and to which they hoped to return, but from which they are now separated.

Our first parents lost the river of Eden through their disobedience; you will recover it by your obedience. 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 298.

### GARDEN-GRACE

'And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.'—GENESIS II. 15.

The first look we get of Adam, the first man, is as he stands in the midst of flowers and great palm-trees—for the palm-tree is one of the very oldest. Whenever we think of him at the first, we think of him in a garden. Isn't it likely God had a meaning for us in this? I think He had. A garden was perhaps the best place He could think of in which to place His best work.

When a painter has painted a beautiful picture, he doesn't make a frame for it with four rough sticks. If the picture is the best he has painted, he puts the best frame round it he can get. And if a man has a beautiful diamond, he doesn't make it fast with a bit of old iron; he has a beautiful gold clasp made for it, for the best always deserves to be set in the best. And so, since the best being God has created was put in a garden, we may be sure it was the best place on earth to put him.



Yes, God loves flowers—how highly He thinks of them we can see from the fact that He puts all good people at the last where He put Adam at the first—into a garden. For, if you notice, the Bible ends as it began—by telling us about a garden—about Paradise, where the flowers never wither and there are no bitter fruits or any thorns—and there the sinless are. If we love flowers, then, we love what God loves very much.

A clergyman friend was speaking to a little girlie once about Eden—telling her how lovely it was, and what flowers and fruits were there. But the little lady had been brought up in London, and had seen how almost every spot that was green was made to disappear very soon, so she was somewhat indifferent to all that was said about Eden, giving this as her reason, 'I suppose it is all *built over* now!' And perhaps she was right! People sometimes do build over their Edens. When a boy or girl loves Jesus much, all is so bright, and they are so happy—as if in Eden! But little by little they grow interested in this, and anxious over that, and covetous of the next thing, so that before they are aware of it their Eden is all built over—the flowers, the green places, the sweet fruits all gone!—and in their places are only bricks and mortar and hard stones. Don't you be so foolish: keep your Eden—keep your true, warm love for Jesus, and you will have an Eden round your heart all your days.

But we are told why God put Adam into the garden: it was 'to dress it and keep it'. Adam, in fact, was to learn how to make things become better and better, just as God does. Adam had to trim the flowers and prune the fruit-trees, and teach them how to grow more beautiful and bring forth more fruit. For plants are just like children—they have to be taught and trained, and Adam was to be their schoolmaster.

What ignorant people we would be if somebody hadn't taken the trouble to teach us!—teach us to read, teach us to write, teach us to cipher, teach us our trade, teach us almost everything—for if you put all the knowledge we started with on the end of a bulrush, it wouldn't bend! And it isn't much different with flowers: they are all wild at the start, and then they are not half so beautiful, or so great, or so fruitful as when they have been tamed and trained—been put to school, as it were.

That was to be Adam's work: he was to train the flowers. Yes, and it was just as he did so, kindly and lovingly, he was to be trained himself to be a good man, and a strong man, and a man who would love God and whom God could love. For you can't take loving care of any living thing and try to make it better, but you will become better yourself.

I knew a widow woman once, who had an only child—a little, weak, pale, sickly fellow. She loved him very much, and as long as she was able she kept him protected from every cold wind, and kept him indoors when the rain was falling and when the snow was about, for he was very delicate.

But one day she lost all the little money she had, and there seemed to be nothing before her but trouble, want, and hunger. But her boy said he would work for her and earn money to keep her—for he had a brave spirit in his weak body. So he went out and got a situation, and marched forth boldly on the cold bleak mornings, and came home often very late at night wet through and through; and the poor mother feared her son would die because he wasn't strong enough to stand all this. But instead of dying the boy grew stronger and stronger, and is a strong man to-day, and a prosperous man too, keeping his widow mother in comfort. You see, in trying to do good for his mother's sake he got good himself—as he worked for her he got strong himself—and so he got the blessing. It is always so: we can't do anything in love—even to the taking care of flowers—but we grow better ourselves. All your life, then, remember, you never can do good but you get your reward, and get it at the time.

Another thing worth learning from the garden in which Adam was placed is: *lovely surroundings can't of themselves make lovely hearts*. Everything was very beautiful round Adam, but you know what happened: he sinned, and then he had to be put out of the garden. No, lovely flowers or sweet fruits could not of themselves keep sin away. Jesus only can do that. If sin gets inside us, nothing that is outside can help us. I am sure if you knew all that Jesus has done for you—to save you from sin—you would love Him.

Let me tell in my own way a tale which I read about the rose. There are more stories about the rose, perhaps, than about any other flower, because, most likely, it is so beautiful. It is only a story, but it has a meaning.

There was a young man once—a poet—in a far-away land in the North, who loved a beautiful maiden with all his heart. One night she was going to a ball, and wanted a rose to wear in her hair. But the time for the roses had not yet come, and though her lover searched and searched everywhere, he couldn't find one.

It troubled him greatly and made him sad to think he would not be able to please the maiden in which she asked him to get. And the oak-tree saw his sadness, and so did the nightingale, and they felt very sorry for him, for their natures were simple and kind.

'You can make him a rose,' said the oak to the bird, 'if you will. There is a rose-tree that has thorns only now: if you press your bosom closely on one of these thorns it will blossom into a rose!'

And the nightingale was glad to think it could make the sad youth happy, and in the moonlight it perched on a twig of the rose-bush and pressed its bosom against a thorn. And as it pressed the thorn it sang so sweetly!—for it was glad at the chance of doing good.

'Press closer, closer!' said the oak; and the bird pressed closer and closer still, till the thorn

entered into its bosom, but still it sang, and sang so sweetly!

'Closer, closer yet!' whispered the oak; and the thorn went deeper and deeper into the bosom, and the song grew fainter and fainter, as the bird warmed the cold thorn with its own heart's blood.

'Closer, yet closer!' moaned the oak; and the bird pressed down and down, till its eyes grew dim, and its song was hushed, and the bird fell dead!

Yes, but the thorn was a thorn no longer: it was a beautiful rose—the loveliest rose that ever was seen, and the young poet came along that way and saw it, and was glad—for he took it to the maiden he loved, expecting she would be glad too. But she had changed her mind: she thought now that a jewel would look better in her hair, so she tossed the rose away. Ah! she didn't know how much love had gone to the making of that rose!

And people don't think or know how much love Jesus puts into the making of every soul that is saved from sin. But you know what He did: He died on the cross in great, great pain that the white flower of holiness might be ours. Wasn't it good of Him?—wasn't it loving?—won't it be cruel, cruel and unkind of us, if we despise the beautiful flower He made at the cost of His life?

Then love the Lord, for He loves you—loves you better than He loves Himself. If you love Him, He will keep sin away from your heart, and by and by you shall walk with Him in Paradise—the Lord's own garden. Aim for this—oh, aim for this!—and as you do it never forget that *there's no love like that love which is willing to warm even a thorn into a flower*. You won't understand all that that means now. No matter! keep it in mind: one day you'll know.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 131.

GENESIS III.

Few spots on earth can be more interesting to men than the homes of their forefathers. Every year thousands cross the seas to visit them. Some people almost worship their ancestral homes. Then multitudes travel far to see the birthplace of some famous man, and gladly pay money for a relic of it; and those who cannot visit such places, prize pictures and descriptions of them. I wish you to visit with me the most ancient and wonderful birthplace and family-seat in the world. You know its name—Eden. We cannot call it the birthplace of our first parents; for they had no birthplace, as they were never born, but came fresh from God's creating hand. But it is the birthplace of all mankind. Will you take a half-hour's walk with me in the garden of Eden? We shall examine the fruits and flowers in that fair garden, and the terrible blight that withered them all.

The third chapter of Genesis describes the most beautiful place, the most perfect pair, and the saddest home-leaving in the world. The woful story has three parts:—

- I. Before the Fall.
- II. The Fall itself.
- III. After the Fall.

**I. Before the Fall.**—To the child's question, 'Who made you?' the child answers, 'God'. 'I will praise Thee,' says David; 'for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' Man was made by God, made like God, and made for God. A gentleman once sowed flower-seeds in his garden, so that when they sprung up, they formed the name of his son in large letters. The little boy found them out himself; was overjoyed that his own name, William Beattie, was flourishing on the flower-bed, and fetched his father to see the wonder. 'Oh, don't you think, Willie, that the wind carried the seeds there! Might they not grow up in that way by chance, or of themselves?' Willie declared that that could not be; somebody must have sowed them on purpose. His father then showed Willie that his own body and the world must have been planned by some one; and so led his thoughts up to the great Creator. Yes, when all other things had been made, 'God said, let us make man in our image, and after our likeness'. God waited till He had fitly framed and furnished the world for its tenant and lord; and then made man as His masterpiece, and rested, having put all things at man's service. And notice, that man was made like God, not in His body, for God has no body, but in his soul. God was the Father of Adam's spirit, and so Adam was at first God-like, 'a little god'. Admire Adam as he came without a flaw from the hand of God. His cup of happiness was full to the brim. He was holy, for without holiness there could be no happiness for him or his children. He had peace with God, and peace with himself. He had Eve as his companion; for she was made for him, as both were made for God. Then everything around added to the happiness within. Eden was a charming district in which there was a glorious garden called Paradise, which means a royal park or pleasure-ground, a palace of all delights. Its four rivers rolled over golden sands, amid bending fruit-trees, and sweet-smelling flowers. Plenty of work added to their happiness, for they had to keep and dress the garden. A paradise without work would be a paradise of fools. The trail of a serpent, called enui or weariness, would spoil all its fruits and flowers. Even Adam and Eve before the Fall found no enjoyment without employment. And, to crown all, they lived in the sunshine of their heavenly Father's smile. Thus man's first home was all heaven.

Though we have been turned out of Eden into the wilderness, we should remember what we once were. Though fallen, you are only fallen, thank God. Though fallen so far, you have not fallen beyond the reach of God's grace. You have not fallen like the angels for whom there is no raising up. Your fallen nature was not your first nature; it is not your true nature; and it need not be your last. Though sin is deep in your soul now, there was no sin in man to begin with, and the Second Adam can undo the mis-



chief the first Adam has done. He saves His people from their sins, blessed be His holy name. Your soul is like a costly but broken vessel, on which you can still trace the owner's name, and some marks of grandeur. The Divine image in the soul has been burnt, but not burnt out. You were made for nothing less than God; and therefore he only is a real man who is godly; for when man was at his very best, he was like God. And God's mark is on you still; so that, if you grow godless, that mark will prove you to be an unnatural monster. A little English girl, who had a large fortune, was once stolen by Indian gypsies; and it was several years before she was restored to her parents. What would you have said if that girl had forgotten her father and mother, and become quite delighted to live among these robbers? But she could never forget that she was born for a far better position than she then had. She always hoped and prayed that she might soon be restored to her true home, and her heritage. And so you in this wilderness should never forget your first home, and your heavenly birth-right; and you should be most thankful that the Good Shepherd has come to bring you back to God, and make you heirs of heaven.

But we must hurry over the brief history of Adam unfallen. Alas! it was very brief, for he soon marred what God had made so very good. This he did by—

**II. The Fall.**—This is the deepest and darkest subject in the world. Many a child, hearing the story of Adam and Eve, has said something like this: 'But, mother, why did God not keep the serpent out of the garden? Isn't God stronger than anyone, and couldn't He have kept the serpent out if He had liked?' A little child can ask that question, but the wisest man cannot fully answer it. Yet some things help us to an answer. Were a father to shut up his boy in a room for life, and not allow him to see any play-fellows, that boy would be kept from many sins into which other boys fall; but then he could never be a man. By and by he would not do anything wrong, because he should become unable to do anything at all. If he is ever to be a man, he must have scope and liberty with all its risks. Thus God left the angels and Adam free. Again, it may seem hard that so small a sin should bring so great a curse. But was it a small sin? The sin of the hand was small—stealing an apple; but the sin of the heart was great; for they rebelled against God, broke His law, and scorned Him. The stealing of a shilling makes a man a thief quite as much as the stealing of one thousand pounds. Our sins might be small, if there were a small God to sin against. While some sins are greater than others, every sin is great, because it dishonours the King eternal, immortal, and invisible; and often sins that seem small to men are great in the eye of God. Once more, you may think that they were more sinned against than sinning, as they were beguiled into sin by the cunning tempter. Eve laid the blame upon the serpent, and Adam laid the blame upon Eve and God.

'The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me,' he said shamefully, 'she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.' It makes one smile to think how children every day try to excuse themselves for wrongdoing by blaming others, just as their first parents did. Still, though tempted to it, it was their own act; and they were punished for it. If an older and cleverer boy tempts you into sin, you know perfectly that you are guilty of that sin. The temptation of the serpent was not Adam's sin, but his yielding to it was.

Now, what was the sin of Adam and Eve? It was just this—that they did not believe and obey God's plain word; they grew proud and discontented; they longed for what God had forbidden; they gratified their appetites when they should not. When you get to the bottom and beginning of every sin, you find that it is the very same as the first sin.

Ah! you are tempted every day by the same cruel tempter. Take care, then, for his cunning overcame the angels in heaven, and Adam and Eve in Paradise. Evil is his good, and our ruin his delight. Your soul is his coveted prize. A man was once carrying a splendid diamond to the king, when he was seized by robbers who knew the secret. He offered them his purse, his rings, his horse, his clothes, but they would not be put off with these things. 'No, we must have the diamond,' they cried. So the Devil—that great Robber—is determined to have your soul. Oh, guard it, for it is the most precious thing you have! If it is saved, all is saved; if it be lost, all is lost. One of the great sights at the Exhibition in London in 1851 was the Koh-i-noor diamond. It was kept inside a glass case, in a small tent, and an armed soldier guarded it. It was preserved so carefully, because it was worth two millions of money. But your soul—who can give a name to its value? It is worth more than all the gold in the world. By faith and prayer commit it unto God's safe keeping; and then it will be 'hid with Christ in God,' like a jewel in a double case, which no thief can break open. None shall be able to pluck it out of the Father's hands.

We shall now see what took place—

**III. After the Fall.**—The effects of the Fall are told in one word—*Ruin*. What pen, what tongue, can describe their misery and shame! Before the Fall, Adam and Eve walked with God, as a man walks with his bosom friend, in holy, happy fellowship; but as soon as they had fallen, they became full of guilt, guile, and fear. Before God had spoken a word, they felt condemned; and were fain to hide from Him in the darkest lurking-place within reach. As Luther says, conscience pictured the wrath of God like a giant standing over them with a club ready to smite them. And the same fear of God is in all Adam's children, till grace take it away. God drove out the man, and placed at the east of the garden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep or guard the way of the tree of life. That flaming sword, what was it? I once saw a great fire that reddened the whole sky. At length

all the flames united in one, and that one flame seemed to reach to heaven. As it leaped and darted right and left, it made me think of a gigantic sword brandished by an unseen hand. The brave firemen dared not go near it, for it turned every way as if to guard all the approaches to the building. And so between our parents and Paradise there was a leaping flame which, as a sign of God's anger, must have been very fearful to the poor outcasts. As they looked to what was so lately their happy home, they saw—

The gate  
With dreadful faces throng'd, and fiery arms.

But the curse did not stop there; it has lighted upon all their children. The world and the Bible show us that sin brings sorrow. You are a proof of it yourself—everybody is; for you never had a sorrow which did not in some way spring from sin. All earth's sicknesses and sufferings and deaths all come from sin, and from the first sin of Adam. Thus misery and man are twins even from the birth. If you find a man who was born before the Fall, you may then find a man who has nothing to do with sin.

And the curse of the Fall has reached the beasts, and the very soil of the earth, as rivers, swollen by floods, overflow their banks, and soak the neighbouring plains. Hence nearly everything is wrong, and out of joint. 'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now' This sorrowful world is full of pitiful sounds. As poets say, the ocean moans, the woods sigh, the winds wail, and the lakes sob. Earth also has been wounded, and its sad voices seem to join the grief of man. The earth, at first so clean and fair, became horrid with thorns and thistles, every one of which was a fruit of the Fall. Then man has to eat his bread in the sweat of his face; as if the earth, once so generous, were unwilling to yield her fruits to man, now that he is the foe of God. When the cattle-plague came to our country, it not only smote the cattle, so that they died, but the spreading infection poisoned the very wood and stones, and in some cases the byres were levelled with the ground, and burnt with fire. And thus the leprosy of sin smote even the ground and its fruits with a curse. After that, will you not bear sin an eternal grudge? Will you not believe that sin, any sin, every sin, is the vilest thing in the universe, and that it is eternally to be hated, and eternally to be shunned? Will you not love the grace that saves the soul from sin?

When Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise—oh, what a home-leaving! what a shock to the guilty pair!—they were not left without hope, for they carried with them the signs and the sounds of mercy: the signs of mercy in the coats of skin with which God clothed them, and the sounds of mercy in these sweet words, 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel' (Gen. iii. 15). This is the mustard-seed from which the whole gospel-tree has sprung. That one

verse tells Adam of a Saviour—a human Saviour—of the woman's seed; a suffering Saviour—'thou shalt bruise his heel'; and a conquering Saviour—'it shall bruise thy head'. As their eyes or thoughts turned to Paradise, what fears would affright their souls! How keenly they would feel their sin and folly! But they would keep that saying in the fifteenth verse, and ponder it in their hearts; and they would thank God that, though they had lost Eden, they had not lost hope.

As the earth turns upon two poles, so the Bible turns upon the two great facts in this chapter—the fact of sin, and the fact of salvation. Sin was brought into the world by the first Adam, and salvation by the Second Adam. I knew a girl of eleven or twelve years of age who, I think, knew a great deal about these two facts. She maintained that she had put her trust in Christ, and seemed astonished that I could doubt it; and, indeed, I had no reason to doubt it. In answer to my question, she said: 'The Spirit was striving with me long, and, after a while, I just cam' to believe what the Bible says about sin; an' after that, I just cam' to believe what the Bible says about the Saviour'. I was equally pleased with the words and the spirit of her reply. God help you, my reader, just to believe what the Bible says about sin and the Saviour; and then, as the garden in Revelation is more glorious even than the garden in Genesis, you will one day dwell in a better home than Adam lost, into which no serpent shall ever enter, and out of which no inhabitant shall ever be driven.

Praise to His rich, mysterious love!  
E'en by our fall we rise,  
And gain for earthly Eden lost,  
A heavenly Paradise.

—JAMES WILLS, *Bible Echoes*, p. 19.

## EXCUSES

GENESIS III.

FIRST, I should like to remind the children of the simple story with which the Bible begins the history of our race. How Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden were forbidden to touch the Tree of Knowledge; how, after they had eaten of that tree's fruit, the first thing they did was to hide themselves. How foolish it is to think one can hide from God! The Lord called to Adam and said, 'Adam! where art thou?' And the culprit crept out from his hiding-place and said, 'O Lord! I was afraid and hid myself.' And God said, 'Hast thou eaten of the tree?' And Adam said, 'Eve gave me the fruit; it was not my fault'. And when the Lord looked at Eve, she, too, had her excuse ready, and said, 'O Lord! the serpent, the wicked serpent, beguiled me and I did eat'.

And here is another Scripture story. Moses and Joshua were coming down from the mountain where they had been in the very presence-chamber of God; and they heard a great noise in the camp and in the midst they saw an idol set up, a golden calf. Round it the people were dancing and shouting in the same way as did the degraded heathen. And like a whirl-

wind Moses entered the camp and hurled the miserable calf into the fire and demanded an explanation from his brother Aaron, whom he had left in charge of the people. How was it they were worshipping this idol? And Aaron mumbled out this most imbecile excuse: 'The people came and said that you had gone and left them. They said, "We don't know what has become of this Moses" (so disrespectfully did they speak of you), "make us a god to go before us". Something had to be done; so I told them to bring to me all their golden instruments and ornaments. I put them into a furnace, and what do you think? It was as great a surprise to me as to you—*there came out this calf*; I did not do it; it just did itself.'

I think I have heard in some of our homes very much the same thing. 'Please, mother, the plate broke itself. I am sure I didn't do it.' As one grows, even without a teacher, it is quite easy to become very clever at making excuses. If you are asked, when father comes home from the city at night, to go and fetch his slippers, it is wonderful what a pain comes in the foot, or an ache in the leg; and 'Mother, I'm sure I shall never find it,' or else, 'the cupboard is so dark'.

When you have read a little way further into Greek history you will meet the story of a Greek boy who was riding on his donkey and saw a tree with cool, luscious figs hanging over the path. He stood up on his saddle and clutched at a cluster. But the donkey moved on and left him hanging there like Absalom. And when the farmer came up and asked him what he was doing up there, he said, 'Please, Sir, I've fallen off my donkey'.

That is just like some of our excuses. Depend upon it, however good the excuse, one never manages to persuade oneself and very rarely succeeds in persuading anyone else.

Oftentimes excusing of a fault  
Doth make the fault worse by the excuse;  
As patches set upon a little breach  
Discredit more in hiding of the fault,  
Than did the fault before it was so patched.

*Qui s'excuse s'accuse*: that is, if you attempt to excuse yourself you generally confess your fault. The great Duke of Wellington never said a wiser thing than that the boy or man who is good at making excuses is seldom good for anything else.

It was at the school examination in arithmetic, and Tom felt particularly dull at figures that morning. Clever Jack sat alongside him, and Tom said, 'Jack, I can't do the thing.' They were great friends, so Jack said, 'Just look over mine.' And that was what he did: he copied Jack's sums. The end of the story is this: Tom and Jack divided the prize; they were far above everybody else. When they were called up to receive the arithmetic prize, Tom felt miserable, and he said, 'Please, Sir, I don't deserve this prize. Please, Sir, I copied'. And his face was red, and his eyes were filled with tears. But by bravely owning up to his fault he learnt a better

lesson than all the sums in the world could have taught him. When you have done wrong, own up. It is best to be brave enough never to do wrong, but if you have done wrong and are going to be punished for it, don't be a coward the second time. Bear it like a man; the smart soon disappears. But the shame of having lied lasts on.—BERNARD J. SNELL, *The All-Enfoldng Love*, p. 125.

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

'And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?'—GENESIS III. 9.

'WHERE art thou?' Why does God ask this? Doth not God know where we are? Why do we tell Him, when we pray, what we want? It is not that God may know. God sometimes asks a very, very solemn question. This is a solemn question. 'Where art thou?'

If you look in the fourth chapter and ninth verse of Genesis, you will find another solemn question. 'And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?' In the sixteenth chapter we have another solemn question, at the eighth verse: 'And He said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go?'

Now I am going to ask you a question, or, rather, God is going to ask you a question, 'Where art thou?' I know where you are. I mean something very different from that. I know we are all here, we are all in this world that God made, we are all going across it; and we are going on to eternity—very fast. We are going over God's world. Some pass over much sooner than others; we are all going across. Where? Unto eternity.

I do not know whether you have ever heard about a young man going to College, at the time that a very good and great man was one of the tutors. He was a Roman Catholic, still what he said on the subject was very good. The youth said, 'I am glad to come to the University. I am going to read a great deal, and study the law, and become very clever.' The tutor said to him, 'Well, my boy, when you have studied very hard, what then?' 'Oh then, Sir, I shall take a degree.' The tutor said, 'What then?' 'Then I shall be a lawyer; and I shall make fine speeches; decide cases; be a learned man.' 'What then?' 'Then I shall be made a judge—become a great man.' 'What then?' 'Then I shall live to a very happy and comfortable old age.' 'What then?' 'Die.' 'And what then?' And the boy knew not what to answer. He never thought of that; and the history tells us that the boy then determined that he would be a clergyman. And he did become a clergyman, and a very good one.

We are all passing over this little sea of life, we are quickly going on to eternity—and what then?

Now I wish to ask everybody in this church, 'Where art thou?' And I am going to ask you five questions. And the first I shall ask is this—Are you one of God's children? or are you not? I mean, are you in God's family?



Now you have all been brought to God in your baptism. What does the Catechism say? 'What is your name? Who gave you this name? My God-fathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' Now mark, you are put into God's family, when you are baptised, upon certain conditions—that you will do certain things; and it depends upon you how you live; because if you do not love God, then you cannot be God's child.

I. Now what I want to know is, what are you at this moment? Are you really and truly, in your heart and feeling, one of God's own little children? Where are you? In God's family, or out of it?

There is a beautiful verse in the Bible which speaks of God's family—Ephesians iii. 15—it is the only place in the New Testament where the word 'family' occurs. Before we read it, I must just tell you that it is speaking of those who have faith and love in Christ: and it says, 'Of whom,' that is, of Christ, 'the whole family in heaven and earth is named'. Do you not see that all depends upon whether you love Jesus Christ? If you really love Jesus Christ then you are in God's 'family'; for all God's 'family' are 'named' of Christ. 'Of whom,' that is, of Christ, 'the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' Christians are all 'named of Christ,' which is having Christ in your hearts.

Look in the First Epistle of St. John, third chapter: the two first verses are about God's 'family'. Let us all read them together. They are very beautiful. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as He is.'

Now to each of you, I say, 'Where art thou?' Art thou in God's family? Is Jesus Christ thy Brother? Is God in heaven thy Father? Dost thou look up to the great God of heaven, in all His power, as such? What a sweet and happy thing if we are all able to look up to that great Being, and say, 'That is my own dear Father! He loves me, and I love Him.'

Once a Roman Emperor was marching through the streets of Rome, which were crowded with spectators, and a little boy ran through the crowd: a soldier tried to stop him, and, addressing him, said, 'Why, he is your emperor'.

'Yes,' said the little boy, 'he is your king, but he is my father, and I am going to him.' He was the emperor's own child. Happy those who can say, 'He is your King, but He is my Father'.

I should like to tell you a story about a German, of whom I read, who was able to say that he was one of God's 'family'. He was a very poor man, his name was Hans; he was a cobbler, and he used to sit in a little stall mending shoes all day, and over his

head was a cage, with starlings in it. He was very fond of them, and they used to sing, and sometimes talk a little.

One day, as he was busily mending shoes, and singing, and the starlings were singing too, a dark young man came past—he had a Roman aquiline nose, and very dark eyes; which showed that he was a Jew. Seeing Hans so cheerful over his work, the young man said, 'You seem very merry'. He replied, 'And why should I not be? My starlings are merry, and I am merry too; and why should I not be?' The young man answered, 'Why should you not be? why I should have thought your poverty would have prevented you being merry; you seem a poor man.' 'How do you know?' 'I never heard of your having riches; I never heard of your having ships on the sea, or money in the bank; perhaps you have been able to make money off your starlings.' 'No, I have a wife and seven children, and I support them all, and yet I am not poor; no,' said he, 'I am the King's son.' The Jew looked upon him and said, 'Ah, poor man, that is the reason you are so merry.' He thought he was mad, and he went away.

A week passed by, and the young man was walking in the suburbs of the town, and he again saw Hans busy over his shoes. 'Good even,' your royal highness,' said he, thinking to please him. 'I know what you think,' said Hans. 'You think me mad; but now sit down, and I will tell you about it. I was singing about my kingdom. If you like, I will sing it to you.' Then he sang a very fine German hymn (some of our finest hymns come from Germany) about the kingdom. But the Jew, of course, did not understand it. And Hans said, 'I will tell you who the King is—how I came to be His son—and what I am.' And he told him how we are God's children, and about Jesus Christ dying for us to make us His children. And the young man said to him, 'Where did you find out all this?' 'Out of this book,' he said, 'and if you will read it, I will give it to you. I think you are a Jew; if you study the prophets, and compare the New Testament with their writings, you will see how they all bear testimony to Jesus Christ the Son of God, who died for guilty sinners like you and I are.' And do you know, that young man became a Christian, and a missionary to his countrymen in Silesia. That was the way he first became a Christian—because old Hans and his starlings sang so merrily. 'Where art thou?' Art thou of the family of God?

II. I will ask you another question. Supposing you are one of God's children—I trust you are—I think you are—now. 'Where art thou?' near to thy Father, or far from Him? because some children are nearer to their fathers than others. 'Where art thou?' near or far off? You know Mary and Martha were sisters, and they were both Christians, but one was much nearer to Christ than the other. Mary sat at Jesus' feet. Martha was 'troubled about many things'. In Luke x. 41, 42, we read, 'And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou

art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. She was nearer than her sister.

'Where art thou?' art thou near—close to Him? I will tell you why some boys and girls are not near to God—why they don't think much about God—why they don't pray to Him. This is it, they know that God knows them; and they know that God knows their secret sins. They would go to anybody else, because they know that none beside can fully know them. A boy or girl who is good would like to go to God because he knows the heart. It is your sins, and because you know God knows your sins, that you don't like to go to Him. If you could say your sins were all forgiven, then you would like to go to God and pray; you could not pray enough—morning, evening, and all day long, you would like to pray. Do we delight to be with Jesus? Let us go and tell Him everything. Then we shall be near God.

I will tell you about a very good man. I dare say many in this church have heard of John Fletcher. He was an exceedingly holy man. His life is published. He was a very wonderful man. Some day or other we will read the life of Mr. Fletcher. When he was a boy he lived in Switzerland, near the beautiful mountains. He used to like to go out, when he was only seven years old, by himself, in the beautiful valleys and mountains, and think about God. He used to think that the mountains were like those where Elijah was.

He had several brothers and sisters, and one day he was very cross, and quarrelled with them, and he was quite to blame; for he gave way to bad temper, and he knew it but would not own it. When he went to bed he was told how very wrong it was. John didn't say anything. When in bed, of course he could not sleep, he laid his head upon the pillow; anybody who has done wrong cannot sleep, so he was not happy; and John did a very wise thing. He jumped out of bed—for very wisely he didn't say his prayers in bed—and he knelt down and told God he was very unhappy, and he felt he had done wrong in being cross to his brothers and sisters; and he asked God to forgive him. And Fletcher says, after he was a man, 'Oh, that was a happy night! and that was the first time I ever tasted sweet peace'. He was near to God.

III. Now I shall ask you a third question. I have asked you if you are in God's family? If you are near to God? If you tell Him everything? Now, are you in the sunshine, or in the shade? Is it light or dark? Are you happy or unhappy? Which are you, my dear children? Are you happy in your own minds, happy with God, happy with your own religious feelings? Are you in the sun or are you in the shade? You know there must be the sunshine and the shade. Some must be happy and some unhappy.

Look at John vii. 12 (I am going to tell you how you may be in the sunshine), it reads, 'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall

have the light of life'. See that. Well now, observe, if you follow Christ, that is, if you think of Christ, try to be like Christ; that is following Him, then you will be always in the sunshine; you will be on the sunny side of everything; because Christ is the sun you know, He is light. Then if you are near Christ, you are in the sunshine, and everything you look at is bright.

What a difference there is between those who walk on the sunny side of the hedge, and those who walk on the shady side. If you are not light and happy, it is because you are not near enough to Christ. If you come near to Christ, you will be close to the light; you will feel like a little boy of whom I have read, who was very happy. I don't know whether you like little girls' or boys' stories best. I like to tell you true stories. I don't know whether I ever told you about little Peter, it is a true story; he was a French boy, and when he was very young indeed, his father died. I think he was a very good man, for before he died, he called little Peter to him and said, 'When I am gone, you will be left a very poor boy; but recollect that everything that happens to you, will always be from above—always think, whether it be good or bad, that it comes from above'. Little Peter, after that, made up his mind to say of everything that happened to him, 'It comes from above'. If anybody gave him a franc or a sou, he said, 'It comes from above'. Now I will tell you what happened.

One day he was going along the streets of Paris, and it was very windy; a plank blew off from some buildings, and knocked him down. Peter said, 'It comes from above'; and some persons coming by said, 'Yes, of course it does'. However, Peter went on, and had only gone a few steps, when a whole roof before him blew off, fell down, and killed three men. So it was through his own falling first that he had escaped being killed.

Some time after that Peter was sent by a gentleman to carry a letter in a great hurry, and Peter, in trying to jump over a ditch, fell in, and lost the letter; he said, 'It comes from above'. He went home to the gentleman, and told him he had lost the letter in the ditch, and he said, 'It comes from above'. And so it did. The gentleman became angry and dismissed him. A few days afterwards the gentleman sent for him, and said, 'Here are three louis d'or (guineas) for you, because you tumbled in the ditch; if that letter had been delivered, it would have done me a great deal of harm; and I am so glad that I give you this money'. Peter said, 'It comes from above'.

Years passed by, and Peter grew, and he not only grew a good man, but a great and rich man; and he lived in England as a great manufacturer in Birmingham; but let what would come, he always said, 'It comes from above'. He was always in the sunshine.

IV. Now I am going to ask you my fourth question. This is a very important one. I have asked you, Are you in God's family? Are you near to God?

Are you happy? Are you in the sunshine? And now I ask you—Are you in the path of duty? are you where you ought to be? Whether you are living at home, or at school, are you living in the path of duty?

There was a man once out of the path of duty, and God spoke to him. Look at I Kings xix. 9. God says, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' He had no business to go into the wilderness. He ought to have had faith in God. Therefore God thus spoke to him. 'What doest thou here?' Thou art out of the path of duty. Don't you think God could say this to some of us individually—'What doest thou here?' Thou art out of the path of duty.'

It is a narrow path; sometimes a steep path. Some persons have a path with a great many enemies; some have a path where they are laughed at; and some have a peaceful path—a heavenly path.

For instance, Are you happy? Are you trying to get on? Are you trying to please your master or mistress? Are you trying to please God? Are you in the path of duty? Have you some sin to conquer, or have you conquered it? Perhaps you have a bad temper; perhaps you are idle; perhaps you grieve at every little trouble. Are you a conqueror? Are you in the path of duty? Are you, by God's grace, endeavouring to conquer your temper every day? Perhaps you are a great boy or girl—are you trying to do good? Is your example good? Is your conversation good? Do you ever lead a younger boy or girl to do wrong? Which way is your face? heavenward—towards heaven? 'Where art thou?'

There was a boy named Frank. One Wednesday, being a half-holiday, he went out with some companions; and when they had gone a long way, they became very tired, and went to a public-house, and asked Frank to accompany them. He said, 'I shall not go in'. The other boys laughed at him, and told him not to be so foolish, and one called him a coward. 'Come in,' they said. 'No, I cannot, I must obey my orders,' he replied. 'What!' said they, 'have you orders? Who gave you orders? Did your mother? Did your master?' 'No, I have my orders, and I shall obey them.' They said, 'What are your orders?—orders—nonsense,—orders!' 'Well,' said Frank, 'I will show you.' And he pulled a book out from his pocket, and opened it (it was the Bible) at Proverbs iv. 14, 15. 'There,' said he, 'is the order of the All in all, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings.' Let us read these two verses, my dear children. 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' Frank said, 'God is All and in all; He commands me, and I obey my orders'. That was a boy in the path of duty. Are you there—in the path of duty?

V. Now I come to my last question. I will suppose that you are in God's family—that you are near God—that you are in the sunshine—that you are in the path of duty—now, how have you progressed? Consider your age—you are not a very little child. How

far are you advanced? You have grown a great deal, you know, this last year or two; and you will grow (if you live) a great deal more. Have you made progress? Do you think you are in the road to heaven? 'Where art thou?' One step down? Half-way towards heaven? 'Where art thou?'

A good man was once in a town in Switzerland, and saw a man walking in the street that he thought he knew, and he went up to him, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, 'My friend, what is the state of your soul?' The man turned round,—he saw he was mistaken, and he said, 'I beg your pardon, I thought I knew you'. He did not hear of him again for a long time. One day the stranger met him, and said, 'Friend, I am so happy. Do you recollect putting your hand upon my shoulder, and asking me the state of my soul?' He replied, 'Yes!' 'Oh,' said he, 'I have some reason to thank you for that question.' It had made him think on what he had never thought of before.

What is the state of your souls? How far have you gone? Sometimes those who have made the least progress think they have gone the farthest. I have read of a gourd, which grew at the foot of a palm-tree (it is a German fable); the gourd grew quickly up by the side of the tree, and soon became quite as tall—and the gourd said to the palm-tree, 'How old are you?' 'A hundred years,' replied the palm-tree. 'A hundred years!' said the gourd, 'why, I have grown as tall as you in less than a hundred days!' 'Yes,' said the palm-tree, 'every year, for a hundred years, a gourd has done the same—and perished as quickly.'

The surest way to know that we get on is to be very humble—this is always the best way. You know when the wheat is ripe, it hangs down; the full ears hang the lowest.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### A TALK WITH CHILDREN—ON MAKING EXCUSES

Read GENESIS III. 12, 13.

Excuses are very old, almost as old as sin, for man no sooner sinned than he began to excuse himself. Sin and excuses have ever since gone hand in hand. There is a great deal of Adam in little boys, and a good deal of Eve in little girls.

1. Look at *Adam's excuse*. How very ungallant it was of him to speak of Eve in this way! Yet I have known little boys quite as ungallant, when they have tried to put all their own blame on their little sisters. How Adam must have despised himself after this miserable pretence; and how little boys must often have looked with contempt upon themselves for having meanly tried to make scapegoats of those weaker than themselves! It were far better had they never made an excuse, for a false excuse more than doubles the sin, and is far more aggravating than the first wrong.

2. *Eve's excuse* is not a whit better. It is true that she was not mean enough to turn the blame back



on her husband. She felt she was to be blamed more than Adam. But she put all the fault upon the serpent. How humiliating was her pretext! There she stood, made after the likeness of God, and yet she confessed that she had listened to the serpent rather than obeyed her God! I have heard little girls, too, give very humiliating excuses, such as 'I have a quick temper'; 'I can't help it, and there's an end of it.' *No, that is not an end of it.*

Notice that the excuses of both Adam and Eve were largely untrue. You would think that they had no will of their own; and yet if Eve had questioned Adam's right to make his own choice, and the serpent had suggested that Eve had no self-control, both would have indignantly resented the insult.

We read in Luke xiv. 18, 'They all with one consent began to make excuse'. '*Begun!*' There is here a quiet suggestion that they were a long time before they finished.

Now, bad as excuses are, they show that people are ashamed of doing wrong, and there is hope of everyone who blushes at the thought of wrongdoing. The *Tempter* was not ashamed, hence there was no hope concerning him. But if we are ashamed, how much better it is to confess our faults. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Each of you can pray, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner'; and if you thus pray earnestly, the Lord *will* forgive, will be your Lord and your Guide even unto death, and your everlasting portion.—DAVID DAVIES.

### THE ANGRY LOOK, THE ANGRY WORD, AND THE ANGRY BLOW

'And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.'—GENESIS IV. 13.

**The Two Offerings.**—We can just imagine Cain and Abel taking their offerings to God. They have their altars erected, and the wood has been laid upon them. Everything is ready. Cain commences to place his offering on the altar. What a quantity of fruit he has brought, and of every kind. Just think what a lovely sight it is. All that rich fruit piled up on the altar, and possibly adorned with flowers. On the other hand, look at Abel's. A poor innocent lamb is standing at his side. He ties its legs with bands, and lays it on the altar upon the wood. He lifts the knife, and kills it, and the blood runs down upon that altar. How cruel it seems! Cain's offering is much more pleasing to the eye, and seems much more in accordance with gentleness and love. That beautiful fruit is pleasing to look upon. Not so that slain lamb, with its blood streaming down over the wood.

But there was a great reason for this. Abel's offering was a sin-offering, and sin is not beautiful to look upon, and therefore the offering for sin cannot be pleasing to the eye. It has been often asked, 'Why did Abel offer a lamb to God? How did he know God would be pleased with such an offering?' This question has troubled others besides children. I do not

think Cain and Abel were very different to little boys of to-day. When father is doing anything, we want to know all about it, don't we? What little 'Paul Prys' boys are, 'poking their noses' into everything, asking thousands of questions about this and that. Little girls, too, are a *little* inquisitive sometimes, are they not? Of course all children are. That is the way we find out about things, isn't it? We should not know very much if we did not ask questions. Do you think we should? And grown-up people think we are dreadful plagues sometimes, don't they? Well, I think we must acknowledge that we are, when we will not take *no* for an answer, and will ask questions about things which do not concern us, and pry into other people's business. And then we ask such strange questions sometimes.

Well, if Adam or Eve had not told their sons all about the offering of the lamb, I think when Cain and Abel first saw their father take a lamb to a large heap of stones he had built up, and having placed it on the stones, look up to heaven and pray, and then kill it, and burn it, they would, when all was over, have been sure to say, 'Father, why did you do all that? Why did you kill that dear little lamb? Had it done anything wrong?' Then their father would have to say, 'No, it had not'. 'Well, why did you do it then, father?' And so Adam would have had to tell them how that God made them, and placed them in a beautiful garden, and gave them so much, and they had been so happy. Only God had told them not to do one thing—not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that if they did they should die. Then poor Adam would have had to tell them how Satan came and tempted him and Eve, and that they believed Satan and not God, and ate of the fruit. 'And didn't you die?' they would ask. 'No, my boys; God was very kind to us, although we had been so wicked. He indeed sent an angel, and drove us out of that beautiful garden, and we shall die some day. But God has told us to bring a lamb, and offer it up to Him, and that He will accept the offering of the life of the lamb for ours; and so when I take the lamb and kill it, I ask God to pardon all my sins, and accept that lamb in my stead.'

So no doubt Adam told his sons all about his sin. Wasn't Adam silly to disobey God, and do what he was told not to? Do we not do what we are told not to sometimes, although God has said, 'Children, obey your parents'? See what an awful sin it must be, or else God would not have punished Adam and Eve so severely for it.

Cain and Abel therefore knew in this way, or in some other, that when they had sinned they must bring a lamb, and offer it up to God. The kind shepherd that Abel no doubt was, would never have taken his best little lamb and killed it if he had not known that God had ordered it.

For some reason or other Cain would not bring a lamb; we are not told why. He may have been very proud, or he might have thought, 'I am not very wicked, not so wicked as Abel. It is all very well

for Abel to take a lamb; I am not very bad.' So we can sometimes see sin in our brothers and sisters, can't we? When you have been quarrelling, do you not say, 'Oh, it wasn't my fault; it was brother's?' Cain brought what God had not asked for, and God would not receive it. His offering was a very beautiful one, but it was not an offering for sin. If Cain had taken the lamb and offered it first, and then when he knew God had accepted it and pardoned his sins, had brought the fruit as an acknowledgment of his gratitude to God for all the good things God had given him, then God would have been pleased with it. So we say now, 'I will try and be very good; I will do something for God'. This is all very well, dear children, and we should do all this and much more; but there is one thing we must do first. We must go to God as sinners, and seek pardon from Him for all our past sins. If this is not done, and we do not first give God our hearts, God will not be pleased with our works. All our working and all our trying will not take our sins away, will it?

Abel brings his lamb; it had never committed any sin; he had. By his sins he had forfeited his life, and he ought to die. He takes this guiltless thing, and as he lays it on the altar he sees himself lying there represented in that lamb. As it dies he beholds the death his own sins had merited.

**Cain's Offering Rejected.**—And then, somehow or other, I don't know how, Cain knew that God had received Abel's offering, and that his own was rejected. I have seen a picture, and I dare say you have also seen it, in which the two are in the field, each standing before his altar. The smoke from Abel's offering is going straight up to heaven; whilst that of Cain's is all blowing about, so that he himself is almost hidden in the smoke from his own altar. We don't know whether this was so or not, but he knew very well that God was displeased with him. We know sometimes whether we are pleasing God or not. Something within tells us when we have been doing right or wrong. When we have been doing wrong we hardly like to see our parents; we cannot look them straight in the face, can we? Somehow or other Cain knew that God had not received his offering, and what did he feel about it? I think very much as some of us do when others do better than we do. When, for instance, the prizes are given in the Sunday schools, and when we don't get a prize, what do we go home and tell our mothers? 'Well, mother, I have been very naughty this year and not learnt my lessons, and have not been so attentive as I should have been, and I have caused my teacher a great deal of pain.' Is that what we say? or is it, 'Janie got the prize because she is teacher's favourite'? Is that more like it? It is sometimes the same at the end of the school year, is it not? You know best. And sometimes we have anything but the kindest of feelings towards those who gain the prize. I know there are noble-minded children, who try all they can to get a prize; but if they fail, are the first to praise those who win it. But I wish there were more

of this kind. Does Cain say, 'I have been very silly; yea, I have been very wicked; I will go and get a lamb at once and offer it to God'? No; I quite think he went away, saying, 'Abel is God's favourite; God favours my brother. It's no use my trying to do what is right; God will not receive it. I hate my brother.' And the more he thought of it the more angry he became with God, and the more he hated his brother. One day the brothers met in the field and began to talk to each other, and Cain grew very angry, and the envious feeling grew stronger, and he got into a violent passion, and struck his brother and slew him, and Cain was a murderer.

**'I Couldn't Help It.'**—On going down to the cells one morning in the prison of which I was then chaplain, I met a man whom I had had under my care more than once. I found him very sullen and downcast, and after a little conversation I commenced questioning him about his offence. He had been frequently sent to prison for drunkenness. So I said, 'Well, H—, you have a long time now—three months. Tell me how it happened that you have so long a term this time.' 'Well, sir,' he replied, 'I don't know anything about it. I got drunk, I suppose, and they said I knocked my mother about. I suppose I did, but I don't know anything about it, and if I did do it, you see, sir, I couldn't help it.' The real truth of the case was this: This young man, of about twenty-four years of age, got very drunk, and on going home at night began to beat his poor widowed mother so badly that he knocked her down, and then kicked her. The police interfered, and the young man was taken before the magistrates. His mother could hardly be got to give evidence against her son, although he had been so cruel. She said he was very kind to her when he was sober. This was the thing that he said he could not help. Drink made him do it. Drink was the master, and this man was a slave to it. I suppose you agree with me, that if he could not help beating his mother when he was drunk, he ought not to get drunk, don't you?

Now you very often say and do things when you are in a temper or passion that you are sorry for afterwards, and you say, 'I could not help it, because I lost my temper'. My dear child, my young friend, you have no more right to get into a passion than that young man had to get drunk. You do not know what dreadful thing you may do when passion is master and you are the slave. Jesus says, and Jesus never said anything that was not true, 'Who-soever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (Matt. v. 21). St. John says, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer' (1 John iii. 15).

'And the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?' And Cain replied, 'I know not'. Thus he tries to hide his sin from God by telling a lie. Even now he shows no sign of repentance, and so God passes sentence. He must be a fugitive and a vagabond. Cain is to be a wanderer all his days. Poor Cain! He hangs his head; his punishment is



very heavy. He cries, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear'. If he had only done as God told him, if he had brought the lamb and asked God to forgive him, he would not have committed his terrible sin, and would have been spared this awful punishment. And now suppose, as Cain went out from the presence of God, with his head hanging down and his heart overwhelmed with sorrow, some one had drawn near to him, and said, 'Cain, what is the matter?' and he had answered, 'Oh, I have been so wicked; I have given way to an angry passion and killed my brother, and God has doomed me, and I am become a vagabond and a wanderer!' And supposing the stranger had said, 'Cain, I am very sorry for you, and there is a mark on your brow; what is that?' 'That mark brands me as a murderer.' And then suppose the stranger had said, 'Well, Cain, I will take that mark on myself, and I will go out and be a wanderer for you, don't you think Cain would have loved him? I think he would. But no such stranger came to Cain.

What is the punishment due to our sins? Is it not greater than we can bear? God has said, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die'. We cannot, and we need not, bear our own punishment. Cain had no one to bear his, but there is One to bear ours. Don't you think we ought to love Him for it? Just think, what would it be, supposing we had no Saviour to bear our punishment for us? We all hope to get to heaven by and by, but there would not be the slightest chance of going there. Heaven would have been the home of angels, but not of you and me. Those bright spirits would have enjoyed God's presence, but we should not.

Let us look at the Lamb of God in the garden of Gethsemane. Why is He so sorrowful? why that intense grief? Dear child, He is bearing thy punishment for thee. See, they have made bare His back, and the scourge falls heavy upon it; it is bleeding. He is bearing thy punishment. Those stripes should have fallen on thee. They press the crown of thorns on His brow till the blood trickles down over that lovely face. They mock Him, they smite Him, they spit upon Him. He bears it patiently. Why? Because it is thy punishment. Loving Saviour, oh, how He loves! They have nailed Him to the cross; they have pierced His side. His blood runs down on that altar. He groans; He cries out in His pain. He is bearing thy punishment. 'It is finished'; the pain is over. He has paid the debt. He dies. He has borne, dear child, thy punishment. He has given His innocent life for thy guilty one. My child, He bore thy punishment; He paid thy debt. Could He have done more? Did He leave anything undone?—J. STEPHENS, *Living Water for Little Pitchers*, p. 60.

#### ENOCH THE MODEL WALKER

'And Enoch walked with God.'—GENESIS V. 22.

This is a short account to give of a life that was three hundred years long; but it is a very satisfactory account.

We hear a great deal, in these days, about walking and walkers. Men, and women too, spend days and weeks in walking matches. A sum of money is offered as a prize, and the one who proves the best walker gets the prize. I have no wish to join company with these walkers. But here, in our text, we have a grand old walker spoken of. I should like to join company with him; yes, and I should like all my young friends to unite with me in trying to take the walk which Enoch took.

Enoch comes next, in our course of 'Bible Models'. He stands before us as 'The Model Walker'. What we are told about him is that—'Enoch walked with God'. And the question we have to try and answer is this: *What sort of a walk is a walk with God?*

And in answering this question there are four things about this walk of which we wish to speak.

1. **In the first place, if we Walk with God, we shall find that we have—a Safe—Walk.**—There are many places in which people walk that are very dangerous; but if we are walking with God, as Enoch was, He will guard us from danger, and make the path in which we are walking safe. Look, for a moment, at some of the things told us in the Bible, to show how safe we are, when we are walking with God.

There was a time in the life of the patriarch Abraham when he thought himself in great danger. And no doubt this was true. He had done something which gave great offence to several very powerful kings who lived near him. He had every reason to expect that they would raise a mighty army, and come against him to destroy him. God knew just how Abraham was feeling, and He gave him this sweet promise for his comfort:—

'Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield' (Gen. xv. 1). This must have been very cheering to Abraham. It was just what he needed. It was enough to take away all his fears.

In several sweet passages of Scripture, God says He will uphold His people, and save them by His right hand. And in one place He promises to keep them 'as the apple of His eye'. No part of the body is so carefully protected as the eye. And this gives us a good illustration of the safety of those who walk with God.

*A safe walk.*—During a sudden freshet, a labouring man and his child, living in a cottage that stood by itself, were obliged to walk at midnight for more than a mile through water reaching to the little boy's waist before they could reach a place of safety.

After they had changed their clothes, and were feeling comfortable, the friend in whose cottage they had found shelter said to the little boy, 'And wasn't you afraid, Jack, while walking through the water?'

'No, not at all,' said the little fellow, who was but seven years old: 'I was walking along with father, you know. And I knew he wouldn't let the water drown me.' This was very sweet. And if, like Enoch, we are walking with God, let us remember that we are walking with our heavenly Father. And

He promises us expressly, 'When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee' (Is. XLIII. 2).

Here is a good illustration of the safety of those who are walking with God.

*Hidden and safe.*—One morning a teacher found many empty seats in her schoolroom. Two little scholars lay dead at their homes, and others were sick. The few children present gathered round her, and said, 'Oh! what shall we do? Do you think we shall be sick, and die too?'

The teacher gently touched the bell, and said, 'Children, you are all afraid of this disease. You grieve for the death of your little friends, and you fear that you also may be taken. I only know of one thing for us to do, and that is to hide. Listen while I read to you about a hiding-place. Then she read the ninety-first Psalm, which begins thus: 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' They were all hushed by the sweet words, and then the morning lesson went on as usual.

At recess, a dear little girl came up to the desk, and said, 'Teacher, aren't you afraid of the diphtheria?'

'No, my child,' she answered.

'Well, wouldn't you be, if you thought you would be sick, and die?'

'No, dear, I trust not.'

The child gazed wonderingly at her for a moment; and then her face lightened up as she said, 'Oh! I know! You are hidden under God's wings. What a nice safe place that is to hide in!'

**II. Walking with God is 'a Safe' Walk. But in the second place, Walking with God is—'a Useful'—Walk.**—Suppose that you and I were taking a walk through the wards of a hospital. It is full of people who are suffering from accidents, and diseases of different kinds. There are some people there with broken limbs. Some are blind, others are deaf; and some are sick with various fevers, and consumption. And suppose, that like our blessed Lord, we had the power, as we went from one bed to another, to heal the sick and suffering people in that hospital. Here is a lame man. We make his limbs straight and strong so that he can walk. Here is a blind man. We touch his eyes with our fingers; they open, and he can see. We speak to those who are suffering from diseases of different kinds, and make them well. Then we might well say that our walk through that hospital was a useful walk.

But we have no such power as this to cure the diseases from which the bodies of men are suffering. Yet this may afford us a good illustration of what we can do for the souls that are suffering around us, when we become Christians, and walk with God. This world is like a hospital. It is full of souls suffering, in various ways, from the evils which sin has brought upon them. The truth of the Gospel is God's great cure for all these evils. David teaches us this when he says that 'He sent His word and

healed them' (Ps. CVI. 20). And Jesus was referring to this when He said: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John III. 14, 15). Moses never did a more useful thing in all his life than when he lifted up that serpent of brass upon the pole, so that all the people who had been bitten by these fiery serpents, and who were suffering and dying from the bite, might look to that uplifted serpent, and live. And when we walk with God, as His loving children and servants, by our words, as well as by our actions, we are helping to 'lift up the Son of man,' or to make Jesus known to those around us. This is the only thing that can heal the souls that have been bitten by the serpent sin, and make them well and happy. And if we can do anything like this by walking with God, it must make that a very useful walk.

*A little act useful.*—Not long ago, a Christian gentleman, who was trying to do good wherever he went, stepped into a passenger car in the city of New York. Before taking his seat, he gave to each passenger a little illuminated card, on which were printed these words, 'Look to Jesus when tempted, when troubled, when dying.'

One of the passengers carefully read the card, and then put it in his pocket. As he left the car he said to the gentleman who had distributed the cards: 'Sir, when you gave me this card I was on my way to the ferry, intending to jump from the boat, and drown myself. The death of my wife and son had robbed me of all desire to live. But this card has led me to change my mind. I am going to begin and try to lead a better life. Good-day, and may God bless you.'

The gentleman who gave those cards was making his walk with God a useful walk.

**III. Walking with God is—'a Pleasant'—Walk.**—When we are taking a walk there are several things that will help to make up the pleasure to be found in that walk. If we have a guide to show us the road; if we have a pleasant companion to talk with, as we go on our way; if we have plenty of refreshments—nice things to eat and drink; if there are bright and cheerful prospects around and before us; and especially, if we are sure of a nice comfortable home to rest in, when our walk is ended, these will help to make it pleasant.

But when we walk with God, as Enoch did, we have all these things, and more too. And these are sure to make it a pleasant walk. Solomon is speaking of this walk when he says: 'Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace'. But if you wish to know all about the journey through some particular country, there is no better way of finding this out than by asking those who have made the journey what they have to say about it. And this is what we may do here. Let us see what some of those who have walked with God have to say about the pleasantness of this walk.

*Living alone.*—‘I visited a poor old woman belonging to my congregation,’ said a minister. ‘She was entirely dependent on the church for her support. Her home was a very small cottage. The moment I entered it I saw how neat and clean everything was. She had just been gathering some sticks from the lane, with which to cook her evening meal. Her face was one of the sweetest I ever saw. It was surrounded by the strings of her snow-white cap. On the table lay a well-worn copy of the Word of God. I looked around for a daughter or friend to be her companion, and caretaker, but saw none. I said: “Mother Angel, you don’t live here alone, do you?”

“Live alone! Live alone!” she exclaimed in surprise, and then, as a sweet smile lighted up her face, she added, “No, sir, the blessed Lord lives with me, and *that* makes it pleasant living!” Certainly she found walking with God a pleasant walk.’

**IV. Walking with God is—‘a Profitable’—Walk.**—We see a good deal of walking done without much profit. But sometimes we hear of people who are able to make their walking pay. There was a walking match in New York not long ago. A number of persons were engaged in it, and the man who won the prize secured twenty-five thousand dollars. That was profitable walking, so far as money was concerned, but walking with God is more profitable than this.

Suppose there was a savings bank half a mile from your house, and you were told that if you walked to that bank every week, and put a penny in the treasury, for every penny you put in you would get a dollar at the end of the year. A penny a week would make fifty-two pennies by the end of the year, and if for these fifty-two pennies you were to receive fifty-two dollars, that would make your walk to the bank profitable walking. It would be getting what we call a hundredfold for the money invested there.

There is no such savings bank as this. But, when we learn to walk with God, we find that serving Him is just like putting money in such a bank. Jesus says that if we give a cup of cold water to one of His disciples, or if we suffer for Him, or do any work for Him, we ‘shall receive a manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting’.

And if such rewards are given to those who walk with Him, then we may well say that *that* is profitable walking.

*Please help me.*—Little Johnnie was only four years old, but he was trying to be a Christian, and walk with God, and he found profit in it. One day he was busy in the sunny corner of the nursery trying to build up a castle with his blocks. Just as the last block was being put to the tower to finish it, it all came tumbling down with a crash. Johnnie gazed a moment at the ruins with a look of disappointment, and then, folding his little hands, devoutly said, “Dear Lord, please help me.” Then he went to building his castle again. But as he was finishing it down it tumbled the second time. Hot tears came into Johnnie’s eyes; but quickly dashing them away

with the back of his hand, he knelt down over the ruins of his fallen building, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, quietly said, ‘Please, Lord, help me to build, so it won’t tumble down; and please don’t let me get mad, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.’ Then he went to work again, and built his castle so that it didn’t tumble down.

Enoch was a model walker, because he ‘walked with God’. Let us all try to follow his example, and we shall find that walking with God is a *safe* walk; a *useful* walk; a *pleasant* walk; and a *profitable* walk.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 15.

### THE HOLY GHOST

‘My Spirit shall not always strive with man.’—GENESIS VI. 3.

A FAMOUS painting of Christ on the cross had a wonderful power over all who saw it. It was so real and life-like that they felt as if Christ crucified were evidently set forth before their eyes. The painter was asked how he had managed to put so much feeling into the picture. ‘Ah!’ he replied, ‘I painted it all on my knees.’ He painted in a prayerful spirit. Like him, we should muse upon our present subject on the knees of our hearts; for we are to consider the Holy Ghost, who, with the Father and the Son, is God over all, blessed for ever. The very name should subdue, and bring a sort of awe over us. Holy Spirit, breathe upon our souls now, and new-create us for the service of our God. I have chosen one of the first of the many verses in the Bible that speak of the Spirit, for He is mentioned about three hundred times in the New Testament alone. ‘My Spirit,’ God says in Genesis vi. 3, ‘My Spirit shall not always strive with man’. This address has three parts:—

I. The Spirit Striving.

II. Man Resisting.

III. Man Yielding.

Before the flood the Spirit strove with all, but the people resisted, while Noah yielded. These three parts will give us, as in three chapters, the history of the Spirit’s work in the heart of man.

**I. The Spirit Striving.**—Our text proves that the Spirit strives almost always with all men, even with those who are giants in sin. The words ‘not always’ mean that. The Spirit takes no such Sabbath-rest as the Creator enjoyed. You ask, ‘But how does the Spirit strive?’ Well, I hardly know where to begin with my answer. For the ever-busy Spirit of God visits the ever-busy spirit of man in ways we dream not of. He is like the wind which is constantly playing around us; now in the gentle breeze that fans the brow, and again with tones of thunder in the tempest. But we had better go to the Bible at once. There we learn that He strives with men chiefly about sin and the Saviour.

1. He strives as the *Reprover of Sin*. ‘And when He (the Spirit) is come, He will reprove the world of sin’ (John xvi. 8), and chiefly of the sin of not believing on Christ. When conscience checks you for any sin, and makes you wish you had not



done it; when you feel that you have not treated Christ as you should—that is the Spirit striving with you. And the Spirit strives thus with the chief of sinners. I once lived in a village in which there were two notorious characters, whom I came to know. The one was a poor woman. Her neighbours didn't know her, she said. They fancied she had no thought of God; but they were mistaken. Pointing to a little house, she told me that often in the dark winter nights she had stood at the window, shivering in the rain and snow, that she might hear the good Christian, who lived there, praying at family worship. She hoped that his prayers would do good to her bad heart. The other was a man who had often been in jail. One day he opened his heart to me in words like these: 'You're not to think I'm content to live this way. Many is the strange thought of my own I have, especially on Sabbath days. I see my neighbours, with their nicely dressed children, going past our road-end to the kirk, and I often wish to go with them. I wonder why they never speak to me about joining them. But they never heed me, just as if I was a beast, and not a man. I often think with David, "No one cared for my soul?" He spoke through his tears. The Spirit had been striving mightily for years with these two wild people. It would be as easy to find a man or woman with two heads, as to find one in this Christian land with whom God's Spirit has not striven as the Reprover of sin.

2. The Spirit also strives as the *Inviter to Christ*, and the *Revealer of Christ*. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come'; and as to when you are to come, 'the Holy Ghost saith, to-day'; and Christ says, 'He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you'. Often good desires spring up in you; you wish you were good; you wish you could live without the fear of death; your heart is moved sometimes by the wondrous love of God and the Saviour; some sweet text or hymn gives you a sense of Christ's matchless beauty; sometimes you feel that it is sad and sinful not to follow Him. Ah, it is the Spirit gently striving, that He may draw you unto the Saviour!

II. **Man Resisting the Spirit.**—The Spirit could not strive with man, unless man strove with the Spirit, for it takes two for a striving. If man did not resist, the Spirit would be known only as the heavenly Teacher, whom all gladly obeyed. But at the flood everybody opposed the Spirit, except Noah and his family. And Stephen, the first Martyr, said to the Jews, 'Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye'. You can easily fancy what sort of men they were in Noah's day—great giants in body, mind, and sin; despising Noah and his warnings, making rare sport of the saint and his ark. Of course, none of you would be guilty of such bad behaviour. Yet I can believe that some of the giants did not openly resist Noah, and yet resisted the Holy Ghost. They were no scoffers, nor enemies of Noah; but they did not care for his religion or

his sermons. They would not be troubled about such things. An army may be resisted by soldiers; but it also often meets with resistance from a mass of rock lying across the path. Engineers estimate its power of resistance, as they call it, and consider how they can overcome it. And so there are people who do not openly oppose what is good, while their thoughtless hearts are like a rock deeply rooted in the earth, and they are as successful resistors of the Spirit as the men who were drowned by the flood. If you often hear God's Word, but never heed it; if you won't think about good things; if you always say that there will be time enough by and by, then you are resisting God's Spirit, though you are no liar, or swearer, or scoffer. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit,' the Apostle says most touchingly, 'whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'

III. **Man Yielding to the Spirit.**—The difference between resisting and yielding is the difference between the giants perishing in the flood and Noah safe in the ark. You should yield as Noah yielded. He yielded *once for all in conversion and always in holy living*. We do not know the time when Noah yielded; but, unless he was one of those who are sanctified from childhood, there was a time when his selfish will was conquered, and he gave himself to God. A soul is truly converted when he yields thus to the striving Spirit. Sometimes the struggle lasts for years. Many have described their feelings under it. Two men, as it were, wrestled in the same breast; two wills fought against each other. The Spirit strove to conquer the heart. He used the terrors of the law and the sweet mercies of the gospel, that the man might be both driven and drawn to the Saviour. Often he was on the point of yielding; he almost did it, yet did it not. He had his finger on the latch, and his foot on the threshold; a single step would have brought him into the kingdom; he had the one foot lifted to take it, and then drew back. Even Agrippa was in such a state when he confessed, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian'. A man lately thus described to me one of his companions: 'His heart is touched, and he has given in so far; but he has not just taken the jump yet. He's like the pendulum: sometimes he seems to be on the right side, and again he is on the wrong.' A Kaffir chief, who had long been halting between two opinions, declared his decision to the missionary by saying, 'I have now leapt the ravine'. He had fairly yielded to the Spirit, who had long been pressing him to leap over the boundary between his idols and the Saviour. It would be a joy to me if I could help you to understand what true decision is; and I will take from the Bible another illustration, which places before us another side of this yielding. Isaiah prophesies of Jesus, 'He will not quench the smoking flax' (XLII. 3); that is, the feeble, flickering wick in the lamp. Now, you have a good desire in your heart. It may be very faint, like the smoking flax, which gives out much smoke, but no

clear flame. Still it is there. Thank God for it; and thank God too that His Spirit strives to kindle it into a steady flame.

While Noah yielded once for all at his conversion, his whole life was a yielding to the Spirit. He was like soft clay in the hand of the heavenly Potter, who shaped him into a vessel fit for carrying the treasures of grace to men. So far as we know, he yielded always, except once when he drank strong drink, and made himself the scorn of fools. In our day as in Noah's, strong drink, more than any other outward thing, hinders men from yielding to the Spirit. It has the dreadful power of darkening all the soul, and making the heart unyielding. My advice to you about it is, 'Touch not, taste not, handle not'. If you take that advice, I am sure that you will never rue it. Don't think that you are in no danger; for Noah, preacher of righteousness, and builder of the ark for one hundred and twenty years, Noah—amid all the warnings of the flood, and fresh from a new covenant with God—even Noah was found lying drunk in his tent. Beware. But, with that one exception, he was a whole man on the side of God. He yielded always to the Spirit as his Guide, Enlightener, Comforter, and Sanctifier. We must yield wholly and gladly. A clever Fiji chief, who was a great politician, died lately. 'My right hand is Wesleyan, he used to say, 'my left hand is the Pope's, and all the rest of my body belongs to the idols.' In the service of Christ you cannot cut and carve as he did; you must yield all or nothing. And it is easy to yield all when the heart has been lovingly yielded. It may seem very hard to do all a Christian should. But you must remember that he gets a new nature; and the new life is as natural and pleasant for the new nature as the old life was for the old nature. It is misery and death for a fish to breathe on dry land; but give the fish the nature of a bird, and it will rejoice in the sunshine. Dr. Livingstone's Nassick boys and Johanna men were always complaining, and at last deserted, while he gladly pushed on in spite of disease. He and they had the very same work, only it was much easier to them than to him; but his heart was in it, while theirs was not; and that made all the difference. What a grief if you were forced from your snug homes to spend a winter in the Arctic regions! But many rich men have been glad and proud to do so; and many more who were not chosen for the expeditions were sorely disappointed. For they had a heart for these bold enterprises. They were smit with the desire of fame, and of grand discoveries. Now the new life would be like a winter in Greenland, if you had to live it with the old nature. But the Spirit gives us a taste for it, and joy in it, so that we prefer it to any other, and choose it as the only life worth having. The Spirit writes God's laws in the heart, and then duty is changed into delight.

My last word is *yield*—yield to the striving Spirit.  
—JAMES WILLS, *Bible Echoes*, p. 217.

## NOAH, THE MODEL WORKER

'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he'.—GENESIS VI. 22.

We may consider Noah as 'The Model Worker'. In our text, what we read of him is thus expressed: 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he'. And in setting his example before us as a model worker, we may notice *five* things about his way of working, in which we may well try to imitate him.

**I. Noah was—'a Ready'—Worker.**—And in this respect he is a good model to set before us.

It was a very hard thing that Noah was commanded to do. He was told to build an ark, or a ship, that was very remarkable for its size. Nothing like it had ever been heard of before. Its length was to be four hundred and fifty feet, its breadth seventy-five feet, and its height forty-five feet. This was much larger than any of our ordinary ships of war.

But Noah was not a shipbuilder himself, neither were his sons. He did not live in a seaport town, where the people were familiar with the business of building ships. He lived in an inland country, far away from the sea. We do not know that he, or any one else then living in the world, had ever seen a large ship. No doubt they had canoes and other small boats for crossing the rivers. But we have no reason to suppose that any vessels larger than these had ever been built. And this must have made the work that Noah was told to do very hard indeed. How easy it would have been for him to make excuses when God commanded him to build that huge ark! He might have said, very truthfully, 'I do not know anything about the work of building ships. I have no ship carpenters to help me, and know not where to get any.'

And if, for reasons like these, he had begged to be excused from undertaking a work of so much difficulty, it would not have been at all surprising. But Noah did nothing of the kind. He did not make the slightest objection. Instead of this he went out to work at once. No doubt he asked God to help him. And when we get such help as He can give, nothing can be too hard for us. The Apostle believed this fully, when he said, 'I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me'. And when we remember how readily Noah went to work to do the hard thing that God had commanded him to do, we may well speak of him as a model worker.

It is always pleasant to see those who follow Noah's example, and do the work they have to do in the same ready way. Here is a good illustration of what I mean.

*A sensible boy.*—George Harris was a bright intelligent boy, about thirteen years of age. One day he was sitting on the porch, in front of his house, reading one of those yellow-coloured novels that do so much harm to all who read them. His father came up at that moment, and was sorry to see how George was occupied.

'What are you reading, George?' he asked.

The little fellow felt ashamed as he looked up; but he gave the name of the book. 'I am sorry to see you reading such a book,' said Mr. Harris. 'I have known many persons injured by reading books of that kind; but I never knew any one benefited by them.'

This was all he said, and then he went into the house. Not long after he saw a light in the next room to that in which he was sitting.

Going to the door of the room he saw George tearing up and burning a book.

'What are you doing, my son?' he asked.

'I am burning up the book you told me not to read.'

'And what are you doing that for?'

'Because I am sure you know better than I do, about it.'

George was following the example of Noah, as a ready worker.

**II. Noah was a Model Worker, because he was — 'a Persevering' — Worker.**

If we have anything hard to do, or anything that will take a long time in which to do it, we never can succeed in doing it without perseverance. The meaning of this word, perseverance, is to keep on trying with a thing until we get through. And no one ever had so much need of perseverance as Noah had in the work he was told to do. From the day when God first spoke to him about building the ark, until it was finished, one hundred and twenty years passed away. All that time he was engaged in the work. And he knew, at the beginning, how long it would take him.

We often begin to do things without knowing at all how long it will take us to get through with them. But God told Noah distinctly how long it would be, from the time when he began to build the ark, until the flood should come, which was to destroy the earth. We see this in Genesis vi. 3, when it says, man's 'days shall be an hundred and twenty years'.

How strangely Noah must have felt when he laid the first piece of timber in the keel of the ark, and knew how many years were to pass away before that great vessel would be completed!

We read of men who have become famous by the discoveries or inventions they have made, such as the art of printing, the use of steam-engines, and other things. Some of these men were working away for seven, or ten, or fifteen, or twenty years, before they finished their work. And when we read about the difficulties they had to overcome before they succeeded in what they were trying to do, and how they persevered in overcoming these difficulties, we cannot but wonder at them. And yet, how short the time was in which they did their work, compared with the hundred and twenty years through which Noah had to go on labouring! His perseverance was the most wonderful ever heard of in the history of our world.

How much trouble he must have had in getting the right kind of wood with which to build the ark! And when the wood was found, how much trouble he

must have had in getting the right sort of workmen to carry on the building! And how many other difficulties he must have had, of which no account is given! But, notwithstanding all these difficulties, he went patiently on, for a hundred and twenty years, till his work was done. How well we may speak of Noah as a model of perseverance!

Let us study this model, till we learn to persevere, in all the work we try to do, for God, or for our fellow-men.

Here are some other illustrations of perseverance, that may help us in trying to learn this lesson.

*The shovel and the snowdrift.*—After a great snowstorm, a little fellow about seven or eight years old was trying to make a path through a large snow-bank, which had drifted before his grandmother's door. A gentleman who was passing by was struck with the earnestness with which he was doing his work. He stopped to look at him for a moment, and then said:—

'My little man, how do you ever expect to get through that great snow-bank?'

In a cheerful tone, and without stopping at all in his work, the little fellow's reply was:—

'By keeping at it, sir. That's how.'

'By keeping at it' Noah was able to get through with the great work he had to do. And it is only 'by keeping at it' that we can expect to succeed in any good work in which we may be engaged.

*Stroke on stroke.*—James Barker was a farmer's boy about twelve years old. One day his father gave him an axe, and told him to cut down an old tree which stood in front of their house. He went to work on the tree, but his blows made little impression on it. By and by he got discouraged, and sat down on a log to rest. 'It's no use,' said he in a doleful sort of way.

'What's no use?' asked an old wood-chopper who was just then passing by.

'Why, for me to try to cut down this tree.'

'Nonsense, my boy! you can do it. Just keep at it. Stroke on stroke will cut down the biggest tree that ever grew. Don't expect to cut it down with one blow. Remember stroke on stroke.'

This is an important lesson to learn. It was by 'stroke on stroke' that Noah built the ark. With God's blessing we shall always succeed by 'stroke on stroke'.

**III. Noah was a Model Worker because he was — 'a Thorough' — Worker.**—We see this in our text when it tells us, 'Thus did Noah; according to ALL that God commanded him, so did he'.

Some people are willing to obey God just so long as He tells them to do what they like to do. But if He commands them to do anything that is disagreeable, they are not willing to obey Him. But this was not the way in which Noah obeyed God. We cannot doubt for a moment but that in the great work of building the ark there were many things he had to do which were very disagreeable to him. But this made no difference with Noah. The question



with him was not, is this, or that, or the other thing, which I am doing, pleasant to me? is it what I like to do? No; but it was—is this what God has told me to do? If it was, he did it. 'All that God commanded him he did.'

And it is very important for us to follow the example of Noah in this respect, because this is the only kind of service that God will accept. It was what David taught us when he said, 'Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments'. And this was what Jesus taught us when He said, 'Ye are my friends if ye do *whatsoever* I command you'.

And it is always pleasant to meet with persons who are trying to serve God as thoroughly as Noah did.

**IV. Noah was a Model Worker, because he was—a Courageous—Worker.**—If we had a history of all that took place while Noah was building the ark, how interesting it would be! It was such a strange work that he was engaged in! Nothing like it had ever been heard of in that country. People would come from all quarters. They would look on in wonder. They would ask Noah why he was building such a great vessel as that, where there was no water within reach for it to sail in? And when he told them, as no doubt he did, that God was going to send a flood of water to drown the world for its wickedness, and that when the flood came he and his family would be saved in this ark that he was building, then we can easily imagine how they would laugh at him. They would say he was crazy. They would call him an old fool, and make all sorts of fun of him. And this is something which it is always very hard to bear. Many men who have courage enough to go boldly into battle, and face the glittering swords or roaring cannon of their enemies, have not courage enough to go on doing a thing when men laugh at them, and ridicule them for doing it. But Noah did not mind this at all. He let them laugh as much as they pleased, while he went quietly on with the work that God had given him to do. And so we may well say that he was a courageous worker.

And we must imitate the example of Noah in this respect if we wish to serve God acceptably. We must be brave enough to do what we know to be right, no matter what others may say or do. And it is always pleasant to see those who have courage to do what is right, as Noah did.

**A noble boy.**—A poor boy who had a patch on his knee was attending school. One of his school-mates nicknamed him 'Old Patch'. 'Why don't you fight him?' asked another of the boys. 'I'd give it to him if he called me such a name.'

'Oh!' answered the boy, 'you don't suppose I'm ashamed of my patch, do you? For my part I'm thankful for a good mother to keep me out of rags. I honour my patch for her sake.' That was the right kind of courage.

**V. Noah was a Model Worker, because he was—a Successful—Worker.**—He laboured on through all those long years until the ark was finished. And

then, when the flood came, he was saved himself, and his family was saved, while all the rest of the world were swept away in their wickedness. And who can tell how much good Noah did by his successful work on the ark? That good has extended to all who have lived since then. You and I owe a debt of gratitude to Noah for his successful work. If it had not been for the way in which he did that work, we never should have lived in this world, and never have had the opportunity of doing any good here. And when we think of all the good that has been done in the world, we see that Noah has had a part in it; for unless he had worked as he did till the ark was finished, none of this good could ever have been done. And this is a thought that may well encourage us in working for God. We never can tell how successful our work may be, and what great good may follow from it.

*Praying over lessons.*—'There,' said a little boy, 'I've learned my lessons sooner than ever I did before. I do believe it did me good to pray over my books.'

He was asked what he meant by saying that. 'Well, you see, when I came home from school and looked over my lessons, they seemed very hard. At first I said to myself, "I never can learn them in the little time I have to give to them." But then, I remembered what my Sunday school teacher had told me about Daniel and his three friends; so I thought if prayer helped them it might help me. Then I prayed over my lessons, asking God to help me and give me a good memory, and then I learned my lessons in half the time it generally took me.'

Here was a successful worker. And we shall find prayer a great help to success in all the work we have to do.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 30.

#### THE MAN WHO OBEYED

'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.'—GENESIS VI. 22.

SOMETIMES when I get a group of merry boys and girls about me, they cry out, 'Now please to tell us a story'.

'What kind of a story?' I ask them. 'What must it be about?'

'Oh, about lions and wild beasts,' say the little ones. 'No,' say the boys, 'about the sea and narrow escapes, and something dreadful, you know.'

Well, think what a wonderful Book God has given for all of us. Stories of lions and bears; stories of giants like the great Goliath; stories of wild storms at sea, like that Jonah was in, and like that in which Paul was wrecked. As wonderful as any of them is this story about Noah and his ark.

It was one thousand six hundred years after the creation of the world. All the people everywhere began to forget God. They gave up praying to Him, and worshipped the sun, and the moon, and the stars. Now God looked down from heaven, and saw all the wickedness that was done, and we are told that it *grieved Him at His heart*. For God sees everybody,

and is always grieved by our wrongdoing. I should like you to think of that for a moment or two. Look at it in the sixth verse—it grieved Him at His heart.

'Father,' said a little girl one day, 'you won't love me if I am not good, will you?' The father thought quietly for a moment as the little face looked up to him, and then he said, 'Yes, I shall love you; only it will be with a grieved kind of love that hurts me'. Dear children, it is a very dreadful thing that God should be angry with us, but I think it is very much worse that He should be grieved at His heart by anything that we may do or say. Let us hate sin because God will punish it, as He punished this; and yet let us hate it more because it grieves our Heavenly Father.

Whilst all the people were thus forgetting the Lord, it happened that a little lad was born in the house of his father Lamech. His grandfather was the very oldest man that ever lived, and you can think how the boy would stand beside the old, old man Methuselah, and listen to the wonderful things that he could remember. He knew Adam quite well, and had heard all about the garden of Eden, and could tell how good man was at first, and how happy, until he began to rebel against God. So the lad grew up, thinking about these things, no doubt, and perhaps wishing that he could be as good as Adam had been once, and that God would come and talk with him too.

Now Lamech called his son's name Noah, which means *rest*. He said, when he gave this boy his name, 'This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed'. He thought of his son as a blessing from God. Lamech's daily labour had troubled him, but his little son's winning ways helped him to forget his trouble, and to be more content to work hard, and be weary. In loving Noah, and in thinking what he might be when grown up—a good and useful man—Lamech's heart found 'comfort'. Perhaps he knew beforehand how much better Noah would be than all the other men and women in the world, and so could think of God Himself as taking pleasure in him. Now, boys and girls, each of you try to be to your father and mother what Noah was to Lamech—'rest' and 'comfort,' not vexation and trouble, so that God may be pleased with you and bless you.

So Noah grew up to be a man, praying to God and seeking Him. Thus he 'found grace' in the eyes of God, and he served the Lord, with his wife and three sons. At the same time the other people grew worse and worse, until they had filled the earth with violence; and to punish them for their sins God was about to send a great flood and sweep them all away. One day as Noah was praying beside the altar on which he had offered his sacrifice—perhaps away in the shade of the trees, perhaps away on the still top of some high mountain—God spake to him about what He was going to do.

God never speaks to us in that way now, because we have what Noah had not—we have the Word of God. That is His commandment and His will for us.

Let us read what God said, in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses: 'And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch.' Gopher wood is the wood of a large kind of cypress, very light and hard, and therefore well suited for this purpose. It was to be a very great ship, five hundred and twenty-five feet in length and eighty-seven feet broad—a great deal larger than any man-of-war. And in it all the animals were to be saved. You can think how strange and bewildering such a command must have sounded to Noah. How could he build it? And how could the wild beast be got into it? He comes home and tells his wife and sons about it. They would think it very strange and very unlikely. Would God send a great flood to sweep all the people away—the strong men, the fair women, the little children? How many questions they would ask about it, and how many difficulties they would raise. But no matter how strange it seemed, or how difficult it might be, God had said so, and Noah at once made up his mind to do it. This is what you must notice most of all—how many times it says, 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he'.

But making up his mind to do it was not enough—he must *set about it*. And how should he begin? He was a man like us, and the things must have occurred to him as they do to us. 'How can I build an ark, I and my sons? There is the wood to be cut down, and then it will take years to build; or how shall I manage to keep the wild beasts alive? They may eat us up, or we may perish in the flood after all.' And then I see him set out bravely with the axe. 'Never mind—God has told me to do it, and I will. He will help me,' he says. 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him.'

And so let us learn fearlessly to obey God. We can't see how this is going to be, or that. We don't know how we shall manage about this difficulty or the other. But what does all that matter? God has told us to do it, and when He commands, He always gives strength to obey. I have heard that Mr. Charles Wesley said one day, 'Ah, if I had a pair of wings I would fly'. Mr. John Wesley said, 'And if God told thee to fly, brother, He would give thee a pair of wings'. God always gives strength to do what He commands. Nobody need ever say 'I can't' about anything that God tells us to do. 'Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.'

Then Noah must have thought within himself again: 'What will the people say? The clever men who know all about the stars and the sun will laugh at me, and will say that no such flood will come. Some of them, I dare say, will get angry



with me. But never mind what *they* say. God has told me to do it, and so I will.' So boys and maidens, let us be very bold when God commands us. What does it matter that somebody may laugh at us? The King of kings has commanded us. For Jesus, Who has loved us and given Himself for us, we can be bold. Here, too, let us be like Noah, 'according to all that God commanded him, so did he'.

And now Noah begins to build his ship. Down from the forest they bring the timber; the planks are measured and cut according to the message of God, and they are arranged in order. Day after day finds him at his work. Week after week he sticks to it. Months have gone, and he works on. Now it is years since he began, and yet you find him busied from morning to night with the ringing hammer and the saw. Old men that used to creep out and laugh at his folly have passed away. The little children who watched him cut the first trees and heard the hammer ring about the first planks have grown up to be men and women. I dare say it was everybody's joke, then. Perhaps they called it 'Noah's folly'. But, unwearied, Noah worked on. Summer went and winter came, and day after day he wrought on for forty years, and fifty years, for eighty years—there he was still, though a hundred years had gone. God had commanded him, and so he would obey.

And all this time we may be sure that people would reason with him about being so foolish. The wise men would tell him that it was all nonsense—that no such flood had ever been heard of, and that it was impossible. If it did come, they could get away to the tops of the mountains. Besides, in such a toss and storm Noah's huge ship would be sure to go down. She would upset, said one. She would spring a leak, said another. She would be dashed on the rocks, said a third. The wild beasts would devour all the people, said a fourth. But their laughter did not move Noah. God had spoken, and he would obey. 'According to all that God commanded, so did he.'

And sometimes we shall perhaps begin to get tired, and think that God has forgotten His word. Then let us think of Noah. Sometimes the laughter is hard to bear. But let us keep on obeying. God has commanded, and we *will* do it.

At last the ark was finished. The creatures had come into it. Two and two they had gone up as God had commanded them. But now came a more severe trial of Noah's obedience than ever. Look at the seventh verse of the seventh chapter, and then at the tenth. After seven days the waters were upon the earth. Think of those seven days. The sun rises just as usual, throwing the shadow of the great ship far up the valley; it creeps across the sky, and sets in the west without a token of a storm. Then the still stars creep out, and the quiet night passes without any terror. How they laugh now at this man in his ship, on dry land and without a sign of flood!

But on the seventh day the sun sets wild and threatening. The storm-clouds fill up the sky, lurid and terrible. The mockers look pale and troubled. And now the deluge bursts upon them. Floods leap from heaven to meet the swelling floods of river and sea. Wild waves sweep over the banks and join the surging torrents, and whole towns go down in the foaming waters; and as the hosts sink shrieking they see the ark of refuge borne safely over the waters. Alas! all vainly do they shout now for help from him whom for a hundred and twenty years men had laughed at and made their scorn.

For forty days God watched over the little company. Then the floods went back, and the shrinking waters let the ark rest safely on the mountain top; and as the rainbow spanned the earth with promise, Noah and his family stepped out into the silent world.

And so let us be sure that *God will always punish sin*. It is a dreadful thing that He will never pass by or make light of. And our only safety is in hearing His voice and obeying it. St. John tells us that this is His commandment—'that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ'. *Jesus Christ is our Ark of refuge*. As the floods beat upon the ark which sheltered those within it, so our punishment falls upon Jesus, and by Him we are saved. It would have been a poor thing for Noah to have had an ark, and yet never to have gone into it. He went in, and the Lord 'shut him in'. And it is a poor thing for us to know all about the Saviour Jesus Christ, and yet not to be saved. Come, dear children, let us trust in Jesus as able and willing to save us, and let us cling to Him with all our heart.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 34.

### THE RAINBOW

'And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud.'—GENESIS IX. 12.

The objects used in the Bible for lessons are simple, and such as are often seen by everybody except the blind. They are like the rainbow which fills the whole sky, and is seen as easily by the child as by the philosopher. This is one reason why the Bible is so popular and so easily understood: it brings truth within reach of the senses, while its rich sign-language delights the imagination, and it invites us to enter the temple of truth through the gate that is called Beautiful. It is thus a book for the millions. If we adopt its methods of teaching the whole world may become a Bible to us, full of parables, pictures, and doctrines. As the Bible has so many object-lessons, we may, in any part of the world, gain or recall much sacred learning without books. For the lessons and objects are linked together in our minds, so that many of the things we see and handle body forth to our eyes the truths of the Gospel. Whenever, for

example, you see the rainbow, you are reminded of God's covenant of love with man, and the peace-speaking bow becomes a means of grace to you.

The object here is large. It has two parts, and suggests a third. These are

- I. The Storm-cloud.
- II. The Rainbow.
- III. The Sun.

**I. The Storm-cloud.**—Every rainbow has a dark cloud for its background. That big cloud is here a sign of wonder and fear, as the rainbow is a sign of hope. The first pages of the Bible teach us the awfulness of sin, and of God's holy anger against sin. The vast objects teaching this lesson rise before the Bible-reader as the pyramids rise above the plain of Egypt. Think of the driving of Adam and Eve out of Paradise, of the flaming sword above the gate, of Cain's flight, of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the flood, and of this black judgment-cloud covering the affrighted world. All these are monuments of the evil of sin, and they tell us of judgment to come. They are 'an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly' (2 Pet. ii. 6), and they have roused many to flee from their sins. They are as the red signals along the line at night to warn of danger ahead. They declare as with a voice of thunder that he who sins must suffer for his sin. But do not forget that all the words in the Bible that make you tremble are spoken in tenderest mercy. To a guilty conscience God's frown, like a big cloud, shuts out the sun and covers the whole earth with gloom. You should not try to shut this lesson out of your mind; for I am sure that we all need it, as many things are apt to weaken our sense of sin. And then the dark background adds to the brightness of the glorious hues of the rainbow. Grace is so gracious because it conquers even sin: the rainbow is so very beautiful because it seems to spring out of the bosom of the fearful cloud.

I have read that when the ancient Jews saw a rainbow they confessed their sins. We Gentiles should also learn this first lesson from the rainbow, for its lesson of grace will be quite lost upon us unless we have felt and confessed our sins. The Gospel in both the Testaments is for sinners, and for nobody else.

From the terrifying symbol of sin and wrath we gladly turn to the sweet token of hope and mercy.

**II. The Rainbow.**—It is a great event in a child's life when, for the first time, he sees a rainbow. What a strange joy the sight gives! Wordsworth's lines are quoted so often because they state a happy fact that belongs to the life of every child:—

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began;  
So is it now I am a man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!

In all ages men have spoken in rapture of the rainbow. 'It is indeed truly a heavenly messenger, and so unlike anything else that it scarcely seems to belong to this world.' Ancient nations sang hymns

when they saw it. They were not only smit with its beauty, but they rejoiced in it as a sign that the storm was past, and that they were about to enjoy the sweet and serene sunshine after the rain. Pliny declares that wherever the rainbow's foot rests the flowers are made much sweeter; and Aristotle says that it breeds honey-dew. The poet Thomson tells how the rainbow appears to the swain:—

He wondering views the bright enchantment bend,  
Delightful, o'er the radiant fields, and runs  
To catch the falling glory.

The old Scandinavians said that it was a bridge uniting heaven and earth. They also seem to have had a dim idea that it was a sacred symbol. All have striven to do justice to its exceeding beauty of form and colour. The Greeks and Romans gave it the name of Iris, and said that it was the messenger of heaven, beaming with joy, youth, beauty, and love. They gave the same name of Iris to the brilliant sword-lily, and to that wonderful part of the eye that gives it its colour. In the same spirit the poet Morris says—

As from the storm  
The unearthly rainbow draws its myriad hues,  
And steeps the world in fairness.

To us it is the messenger of heaven in a far grander sense than the ancients dreamt of; for God has made it a preacher of kindness to man, and it has heavenly things to tell us. The Jewish Rabbis said that the white in the rainbow represented God's grace; the red His wrath; and the blue His mercy as the pillar between them. These colours do not stand apart in hostile isolation, but together form the symbol of peace. It is a memorial that God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that He wishes all men to be saved.

As Wendell Holmes puts it—

Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn,  
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn,  
Our rainbow-arch Thy mercy's sign,  
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine.

The Gospel is no cuckoo-song or parrot's cry: it is offered to us in hundreds of attractive symbols. God here chooses as the sign of His covenant the object that yields the greatest delight to our eyes; for beauty is the fitting garment of truth. He wishes everything about the Gospel to be glad, and sweet, and radiant. Hence *evangelizing* is the New Testament word for preaching the Gospel, and that means to declare as an angel; to *angel well*, or *angel forth*. Good news diffuses brightness upon every person and thing connected with it.

De Quincey tells that when a boy, about the time of the battle of Waterloo, he travelled in the mail-coach from London to the country. They carried the good news of a great victory. Horses, men, carriages, all were gay with oak-leaves, laurels, flowers, and ribbons. The guards that day wore their royal liveries, which they exposed to view, without any covering of upper coats. The hearts of all on the coach were dilated by their personal connection with

the glad tidings. All reserve and social distinctions melted away in the common joy. One heart, one pride, one glory made gentle and simple, rich and poor, feel that they were all brothers and sisters. The news kindled like fire racing along a train of gunpowder. Rolling volleys of cheers ran along the highway. The beggar, forgetting his lameness, stood erect, and smiled; the victory had healed him, and said to him, Be thou whole. When changing horses, De Quincey told the news to a market-woman, who threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him for very joy.

A covenant is a solemn union between two; and covenants among men and boys have their tokens.

I have been reading an account of his boyhood by a friend of mine. When his home-leaving came, his bosom friend walked with him to the shore. They cut a sixpence in two, and each took the half of it. They agreed that that half sixpence would be the sign and seal of their changeless affection, and of their hope of renewing in heaven joys broken here.

When a Christian sees a rainbow in the sky, his heart should leap up and lay hold of it as the pledge of God's faithfulness and mercy that over-arch our earth. That thing of beauty should be a joy to his heart, and a means of grace.

It takes two to make a covenant, and God and you are the two. You must choose the covenant, and consent to all its terms, and bind yourself to it with right hearty goodwill, or rather, as an old preacher says, with ten thousand goodwills. You are not asked to face an impossible task, like the little boy in the story, who fancied that if he got to the foot of the rainbow he could by it climb up to heaven, and who ran on till breath failed. God's Spirit begets the yielding, consenting mood in all who pray for His aid.

Blackadder, one of the Scottish martyrs, was one day, in an open-air sermon, appealing to all his hearers to accept and close with God's Covenant of Mercy. A woman cried out, 'Hold your hand, sir, I give my consent'. Her words referred to the custom among country folks of concluding a bargain by shaking hands over it.

Has your heart given its consent? Or, to use another emblem from the flood, pray that your soul may not be like the raven, that unclean bird, but like the deluge-dove which found in Noah's Ark the rest and home it had sought for in vain elsewhere.

Perhaps we might also say that the rainbow, as it spans the weary earth with its arch of beauty, is also a token of the union of all men in Christ's holy brotherhood. The rainbow, according to the Edda, is a three-coloured bridge between heaven and earth.

Shortly after Strassburg had been taken in the terrible war between France and Germany, there arose a great storm out of which sprang a beautiful rainbow, with one foot resting on Germany and the other on France. It seemed as if God then set His bow in the clouds to rebuke the cruel strife, and also as a sign of the good time coming when men shall learn war no more. As we have one God, and one

Covenant with its one token in the sky, so there should be one family over all the earth.

III. The Sun.—'The rainbow,' one of the learned says, 'is the sun's triumph over the floods; the glitter of his beams imprinted on the rain-cloud as a token of subjection'. The rainbow is made up of the rain-drop and the sunlight; it is formed when the rain-drop leaves the cloud and catches the sun's rays. Hence waterfalls often have rainbows. The meeting of the spray and the sunshine creates these splendid visions. While we enjoy the rainbow on the cloud, we enjoy much more the victorious sunshine which comes to us after the floods have spent themselves. When the sun shines forth, the clouds with their silver edges part to let the trembling blue sky shine through them, and soon both cloud and rainbow melt away, and leave no trace in the glorious sky, which presents to our gaze the all-conquering sun.

Thus we rise in our teaching from shadow to substance, from the perishing to the imperishable. While the Bible chooses for its lessons objects that appear in every age, all these objects pass away, like

The rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.

As the rainbow disappears in the sunshine that created it, so all Old Testament types disappear in Jesus Christ, from whom they came. We have thus a fuller light than Noah had. The two men carrying the bunches of Eshcol grapes are like the saints of the Old and New Testaments: he that went before could not see the grapes so plainly as he that came after, though both felt quite sure of their existence. Thank God for your ampler light, and bathe your being in it, and so you shall grow in the life divine.

The favourite objects with the Church on earth are not forgotten in heaven, though in heaven they have dropped off all the stains of earth. Never on earth do you find a rainbow without its cloud, not even around our waterfalls; but in heaven the cloud has vanished while the rainbow remains. John (Rev. iv. 3) saw a rainbow as the chief part of the regalia of Christ's throne, and its beauty added to the joys of heaven. There it is the token of the everlasting covenant of grace perfected in glory.

O Lord, giver of grace and glory, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 26.

### THE COLOURED GOSPEL

'I do set My bow in the cloud.'—GENESIS IX. 13.

Did you ever see *three* rainbows at the same time? I have; many people have. Some have perhaps seen more, one inside the other, and behind the other, but every one alike beautiful. Just now I want you to look, not upon three rainbows, but upon *two*.

This is the first one, the one God speaks about when He says, 'I do set my bow in the cloud'. That is the rainbow you have often seen, the great, beautiful arch of silver and gold, and orange and violet,



which stretches all across the dark clouds, and yet is so light that when it rests on the flowers the flowers are not bent, and when it rests on the sea it doesn't sink down!

Do you know what that rainbow is? It is the oldest gospel that ever was published. Before there were any books or pens or paper this was the way God took to cheer men's hearts and keep them from being afraid. When the rains came pouring down and the streams were swelling into great rivers, and the rivers grew broad like seas, and still the rain kept falling, then men might have been afraid that God was going to flood the world again, had He not made the rainbow be for a sign that He would not.

And so the rainbow comes to mean *hope*. Do you know what *hope* is? It means keeping a brave heart; it means believing the sun will shine to-morrow, though it doesn't shine to-day; it means singing songs in the dark; it means trusting Jesus about everything.

When does the rainbow shine out? Only when the rain falls. And what does it tell us then? Just this: that the rain isn't going to be for ever; it will stop and things will be bright again, and we shall be glad yet in spite of our drenching!

So watch for the rainbow; watch for it when something has happened to make you sad; watch for it when troubles seem all round about you; watch for it when your eyes are filled with tears, for it always shines brightest then. Make friends with the rainbow all your days, for it has always a good word to speak to you from God.

But now I want you to look on the other rainbow. See what it said about it in the fourth chapter of Revelation and the third verse: 'There was a rainbow round about the throne'. That is the throne of heaven—the throne where Jesus sits. There is always a rainbow round about that.

Can you understand all that this means? I don't think so—not yet. You must wait awhile; wait till you are older; wait till the Lord does things you won't be able to understand at the time; wait, maybe, till you are going to die yourself, or till death has taken away from you some one you love. Till then just keep this picture in mind, that *there is always a rainbow round the throne of Jesus*.

A rainbow on earth when the clouds are darkest, and a rainbow in heaven where there are no clouds at all—keep these both in mind and *trust* Jesus, and you will have a song in your heart all your days, and that is the strongest and the best heart which has most music within it.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pev*, p. 31.

### OUR MELCHISEDEC

GENESIS XIV. 18-24; PSALM CX. 4; HEBREWS VII.

WHEN a boy I was sorely puzzled with Melchisedec. I could not understand him, yet something in the name or the man drew me to him. Perhaps you feel as I then felt, and are ready to follow this lecture. Melchisedec is first mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of

Genesis. Returning from the battle of the kings, Abraham was met by the king of Salem, whom he owns as his superior, who brought forth bread and wine, and blessed him. This strange king is lost sight of for one thousand years, till David says of the Christ in Psalm cx., 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec'. He disappears again for another thousand years, and is then fully introduced to us by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Jews would make him Enoch, or a survivor of the flood, or Shem, or an angel, or the Holy Ghost, or Christ. But these are idle guesses. Moses gives us his history: in that history David finds a mystery or a hidden spiritual meaning: in the Epistle to the Hebrews the veil is lifted, and the mystery is 'made manifest'. The story of Moses is the nutshell in which David tells us there is a rare kernel. Paul opens the shell and presents us with the kernel. May it be sweeter than honey to our taste.

The Jews were very fond of beautiful mysteries, which awakened the sense of wonder and the desire for deeper knowledge; and, as the Psalms and Proverbs show, they loved to have truth in pairs or in halves. Their minds moved, as a railway engine moves, on parallel lines and with corresponding wheels; their piety soared as the lark soars on equal wings. As in this subject of Melchisedec, they often gained their idea of the whole truth, just as in geography you gain your idea of the whole earth by uniting the two half-spheres that are separated on the map. The mystery of Melchisedec is thus explained by four pairs of truths. He was:—

I. A Man and more.

II. Priest and King.

III. The Giver of Righteousness and Peace.

IV. The Uniter of Jew and Gentile.

And for these four reasons he was an image or type of Christ.

I. He was a Man and more than a Man.—Many things about him are 'hard to be uttered' or explained (Heb. v. 11). Here, I think, is the key that opens the difficulty: there are two Melchisedecs: the one lived in Salem, and the other lives in this page.

King Henry VIII., the queen-killer, was, as most people believe, a bad man; but Froude makes him a good man. There are thus two Henrys: the one lived at Windsor, the other lives in Froude's history. What Froude did for Henry by hero-worship, Moses did for Melchisedec by omission; but with this difference, that Moses keeps to exact truth. As we have Froude's Henry and the real Henry, so we have, as we may say, the Melchisedec of Abraham and the Melchisedec of Moses. Melchisedec was 'made like unto the Son of God' (Heb. vii. 3). He was not like Him, but was *made* like Him. I have watched an apprentice woodcarver. Before him was a tree, like any other tree. Beside him stood a life-sized statue of Christ. Glancing now and again at the statue, and guided by his teacher, he hewed out a

piece here and there, and soon the tree became a statue. He made it more by making it less, for he thus put a grand idea into it. As that carver elevated the tree into an image of Christ, so Moses, guided by God, fashioned or rounded off the Melchisedec of his story into an image of Christ. It was not an after-thought, but a fore-thought to liken Christ to Melchisedec; for Christ is the original and Melchisedec the copy, expressly 'made' beforehand for New Testament teaching. Paul thinks of Melchisedec only as he appears in the page of Moses, and speaks of him as he finds him there.

What a man of mystery that Melchisedec of Moses is! He seems to have dropped down from heaven. Genesis is the registrar's book of the old world, narrating most exactly the pedigree, birth, and death of its heroes; but, *so far as the story goes*, this man is 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but . . . abideth a priest continually'. Our natural curiosity to know the particulars of so great a man's life is not gratified. He seems to be his own ancestor and his own heir; one sprung from himself, a cause uncased; one ever living among the dead and dying. He stands quite apart, has not his fellow in the Bible, and is like himself only. He towers grandly above Aaron, who was a mere man; for we know all about his birth and belongings. Fix your eye upon this portrait drawn by the Divine hand, grasp it as it lies there, and the subject is delightfully simple. 'This Melchisedec' on whom you and I gaze, not that whom Abraham gazed upon; this *literary* Melchisedec, not that *literal* one; 'this Melchisedec' is an image of Him who was 'without father' as to His human nature, and 'without mother' as to His Divine; as God, 'having neither beginning of days nor end of life'; who in His office was 'without descent' and without succession, and so 'abideth a Priest continually'. Melchisedec was a man, and *seems* more: Jesus is a man, and *is* more.

**II. Christ is like Melchisedec, a Priest and a King.**—There was only one High Priest, and he had a well-known work of his own. Man unfallen had no priest; the angels who fell not have no priest; but fallen man needs a priest to bring him, through forgiveness, back to God. With the sinless the priest has nothing to do, for his whole work is to take away sin. He says to each, 'Thou hast sinned, but thou mayest be saved'. Christ is a Prophet, Priest, and King; but His chief glory lies in His priesthood, and so the Lord says to Him, 'Thou art a Priest for ever'. Christ is before all things a Priest. What hope this gives us sinners!

Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, was also king of Salem, and so foreshadows Christ, who is a king-like Priest and a priest-like King. Pity belongs to Him as Priest, and power belongs to Him as King. His priestly pity and kingly power temper and sustain each other, and as two uniting streams roll along in one full flood of communicated joy. He

saves with all the power of a king; He rules with all the gentleness of a priest. Other kings have often little touch of pity in them. Their favourite emblems of rule strike terror into their subjects. The eagle, with its murderous beak and talons, is the bird of royalty. The roaring, ravenous lion is the beast of royalty. Justice stands sternly with her scales and her sword. A bundle of rods tied like a sheaf, with the protruding axe, was carried before the Roman governor; the rods for beating, the axe for beheading, the rebellious. But our King is our brother-man, who has the most perfect fellow-feeling with us. His kingly power enables Him to do His priestly work right royally, with royal graciousness and munificence. He saves with sovereignty, with a sovereign's generosity. The rebel Themistocles appealed for pardon to the Persian king Xerxes. The king pardoned him in his sovereignty; not as one who had to study petty economics, whose grace was a miser's hoard; for he gave Themistocles the country of Magnesia for bread (about £12,000 a year); Myus for condiments, and Lampsacs for wine. That is how a sovereign pardons, and illustrates one part of what we mean by the sovereignty of God. Our great High Priest has a royal right and a royal power to save, as He makes one thing of Priesthood and Kingdom. Your sin need not discourage you if only you take it to Him. He scorns not your evil case, for which His office exists. The best of us has work enough for Him; for our very virtues have a taint of sin, our prayers need to be prayed over, and our tears of repentance need to be repented of. Shall we not go over to His side by repentance and faith? The golden sceptre of grace is ever in His hand; and whosoever will may touch it and live, shielded by the whole power of His kingdom. What can sin, death, and hell do against those who have Him as their ally?

**III. Melchisedec is a Type of Christ because He unites Righteousness and Peace.**—His name means 'king of righteousness,' and he was king of Salem, or Peace.

Make sure that you understand this mighty truth. The righteousness our High Priest has to do with is held out as a free gift to the most unrighteous among us; and it is thine for the taking.

Melchisedec was king of Salem. A dense mass of meaning lies for us in this title also. Salem, like the salaam given to-day in the East, means peace. Salem is, they say, the old name for Jerusalem, which means 'the firm,' or 'establishment' of peace. The city of our great King has its name from that which creates it and most abounds in it—*Peace*. Its basis is peace, its walls and bulwarks are peace, its very air is peace; the peace of God that passeth all understanding rests as eternal sunshine upon the heads and hearts of all its citizens. As a strong light in a house shines out upon all its avenues, 'the abundance of peace' so fills our Jerusalem as to overflow the suburbs even unto the utmost bounds of the neighbouring hills. So David sings of God's

King and city, 'The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness' (Ps. lxxii. 3), just as our Highland hills bring forth heather, just as our cornfields are covered with corn from hedge to hedge. And it is peace 'by righteousness,' such as Melchisedec images forth. 'A King of Peace! Earth's kings are war-makers; ours is a Peacemaker. Earth's great cities have often been Aceldamas, steaming fields of blood; our mother-city is peace. And what a union of contraries is here! Let the bare idea of God's righteousness enter the heart of a man in sin, and lo! his peace is gone, and he is the prey of remorse. But Christ brings us a peace founded upon eternal righteousness. Hail, thou King of Righteousness; all hail, thou King of Peace. Thou untest a greater mitre than Aaron's to a greater crown than David's. 'Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ.' We grasp Thy cross, and bow before Thy sceptre.

**IV. Melchisedec is a Type of Christ, because he Unites Jew and Gentile.**—Aaron, the priest, was only for the Jews; but Melchisedec, who was out of Aaron's line and above it, was a Gentile, and he was a priest for Abraham the Jew, and for the Gentiles dwelling in Salem. He was a world-wide priest, opening his arms to all the races of humankind, and his city was meant to be the mother-city of all the earth, emblem of the heavenly Jerusalem into which people of all nations shall be gathered. Thus Christ is a priest, not after the order of Aaron, who was for Jews only, but he is 'a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec'; and any sinner under heaven may receive the blessings He brings. He unites Jew and Gentile, He unites all men in one holy brotherhood.

About a hundred years ago, a Welsh boy heard a sermon upon the priesthood of Jesus Christ. It was a new idea to the boy, filling him with astonishment and delight. The doctrine was so excellent and sweet to him, that without delay he opened his heart to it. To this day all the Welsh revere his memory, for that boy became the Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala, the apostle of his native land, the founder of day and Sabbath schools, and of the Bible Society. And such a faith in Christ will give you too a true and fruitful life. If you do not understand all the outs and ins of this subject, you know at least that you are a sinner, and that Jesus Christ is our only Priest and King. Turn then to Him with a wondering, grateful heart. He offers to be your Priest and King. Dare you, can you, would you turn away from Him?—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 89.

#### EVER IN GOD'S SIGHT

'Thou God seest me.'—GENESIS XVI. 13.

The loving Apostle John speaks to us much about our sin, and I think it requires one who is very loving to talk to us wisely about sin; for God is love, and God it is Who feels most deeply the pain and the shame of sin. One thing that John says is, 'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves'. And as all deceivers are sooner or later found out, men who say

they are not sinners, and perhaps fancy themselves rather good, must sooner or later find their own deception out.

A fact, delightful beyond the power of words to tell, is the fact that we cannot hide anything whatever from God. And all the world will live, like Adam, to be heartily glad that it can neither hide itself nor its sin from God.

Now let me show you by a story what a good thing it is to be seen by God.

I have read of a man crossing the sea who was fond of sitting on a certain pleasant but unsafe part of the ship. The sailors had almost forbidden him the place, and had fully warned him of its danger; but he continued to have his own way. At length there was heard a loud thud and splash from that part of the ship, and a cry rang from stem to stern, 'A man overboard! a man overboard!'

All on deck starting to their feet, rushed to the place where the splash was heard, to behold in the foaming wake of the ship a man struggling for his life. The engineer stopped his engines, the sailors rushed to a boat which hung at the ship's side, loosened its ropes, threw themselves into it, and, almost quicker than it takes to tell, lowered it to the water and bent their oars to their strongest strain; for not a second was to be lost. Swiftly they made their way towards the unfortunate man, whom the ship by this time had left a long way behind. Meanwhile, having thrown himself upon his back, he was now floating on the water. When the boat at length reached him, strong arms stretched out to grasp him, and in a moment he was lifted over the gunwale into the boat. The man was saved. Now, what I want you to notice is that the men who saved him were the very sailors who had warned him. You cannot suppose a man in such position as that man in the water trying to *hide* himself away from sight; he would only be too thankful to be seen. But suppose that when he fell overboard it had happened to be night, with no moon, and not a star to shed a guiding ray—then he would not have been seen, the darkness would have hidden him, and the men anxious to save him could not have found him. So, after a little struggling, he must have sunk down into the sea and have been drowned. To have been hidden would have been a dreadful thing for him. But if sinners could hide from God that would be a still more dreadful thing to them. So let us be glad there is no chance whatever of such a danger. All the secrets of our hearts are open to God, and darkness and light are both alike to Him.

It so happened that in that foolish man's accident the very best men to see it were just the men whose warnings he had not heeded, and whose express wishes he had so often disobeyed. Those men might have said, 'Oh, let him alone; it's his own fault. We warned him.' And that would have been true; but their counsels and warnings were more than merely *true*, they were *kind*, and the same kind hearts that first prompted their lips to speak counsels and warn-



ings, next prompted their feet to run to the boats, and their arms to strain at the oars on their mission to save.

Now, God's warnings and counsels about sin are not only true, they are also kind; and the very same kindness which prompts Him to plead with us not to be hard-hearted and untruthful, or selfish, or impure, when we have neglected His pleadings, and by self-will and disobedience have brought the soul into danger, prompts Him to run to rescue us. The first work of His love is to warn against sin; the next is to seek and to save from its deadly effects.—BENJAMIN WAUGH, *Sunday Evenings with My Children*, p. 107.

### THE ALL-SEEING EYE

'Thou God seest me.'—GENESIS XVI. 13.

I AM going to take as the subject of this address one of the best-known words in the Bible. I suppose there is scarcely one among all my young readers who has not learned it, and could not at this moment repeat it. It is not for children alone. It is not peculiarly a 'child's text'. We all need it, and would be the better for hearing it constantly in mind. Indeed, it is the want of believing and remembering and acting upon it, that lies at the root of almost all the evil that is in the world.

When children begin to make their first letters, printing them in large capitals, on a stray slip of paper, or in a book provided for the purpose, the text I refer to is one which they very often take. I have seen it in one and another of these *Sunday Albums*, as they are sometimes called, some of the letters very strange-looking—the E's turned the wrong way, and so on. I dare say some of you can go back to a memorable Sabbath afternoon or evening when you printed the words without help from any one, except in so far as you took a look at the book or card from which you copied them to make sure that all was right. I know of one such book, in which a little boy thus traced his first written words. It was the first and last text in his Sunday text-book. All the rest is blank. It was not many hours till, in a terrible railway accident, the hand that wrote it was cold in death.<sup>1</sup>

You will find the text in Genesis xvi. 13: 'Thou God seest me'.

The person who first spoke these words was an Egyptian slave woman. Her name was Hagar. Her master was Abraham, and her mistress Sarah. Sarah dealt hardly with her maid, and the poor woman ran away. She fled towards her old Egyptian home, and

<sup>1</sup> The Sabbath evening before they died, George was employed in printing the first characters his hand had ever traced. Freddy had said it was quite time now he should begin, and their nurse had given them the book for it. "Let me choose your first text," said Freddy, "and mama will get you the copy." THOU GOD SEEST ME—is the only entry in its blank pages. Could a more suitable one have been put into the lips of the child, even had Freddy foreseen the sudden transition his little brother was in a few days to make, with no eye but that of God resting on him?—*The Way Home*, by Mrs. Barbour.

you might have seen the runaway, sad and weary, sitting by a fountain of water in the wilderness between Palestine and Egypt, not knowing what to do, She was there when the Lord Jesus (the 'Angel of the Lord') appeared to her, asking her whence she came and where she was going, telling her to return to her mistress and submit to her, and giving her great promises for the future. She had thought she was alone—that nobody saw or knew or cared anything about her—that it did not matter what she did, or what became of her—whether she should live or die. Perhaps she was saying to herself, as some other foolish people do—'I wish I were dead!' And when she found that the Lord saw and cared for her, in wonder and gratitude and love—just like others of whom we read in Scripture—she gave Him who had appeared to her and spoken to her a name of her own—she called Him *El-rôî*, the *God of Seeing*. She said, 'Thou (art) the God of Seeing'—or 'Thou God seest me!' and she gave the well or fountain by which she sat a name which it bore from that time, in memory of the great event—*Beer-lahairôî*, which means 'the Fountain of the Living who beholds me'.

Now I would like you to remember this—that these well-known words were first used by a poor, desolate, runaway slave, who did not know where to go or what to do, and had none to berriend her but God. He followed her with His loving Eye, and guided her with His loving Hand, and made her the mother of a great nation, which exists to this day. And she spoke the words thankfully and joyfully, 'Thou God seest me'. He was to her ever after—though she sometimes forgot the word and the name—*El-rôî* or the *God of Seeing*.

And what I wish to impress on you is, that God *sees you*—sees you to-day, as He saw Hagar that day; sees you wherever you are and whatever you are doing. Sometimes the remembrance of this will encourage and comfort you; sometimes it will alarm you. Anyway it is true, it is always true. *God sees you!* Many do not believe this. There are times when we all forget it. And it is just in proportion as we believe and remember and act upon it that it can be well with any of us.

I. God sees your HEART—what you *are*. Others do not see your heart; they cannot. They can only see what is outward. They may guess what is within from what they see without, but that is all they can do. They may be deceived. They may be mistaken. You cannot see the heart of so small a thing as an apple. It looks well. It has a beautiful skin. It is rosy-cheeked, and most inviting to any one who cares about apples. But the moment the knife goes in it tells a different thing—it is *rotten within*. You cannot see the heart of so small a thing as a watch. It has a gold or silver case, and a beautiful dial, and hands such as good watches have, and you may pay a large sum of money for it; and yet its inside, which is the real watch, may be all defective and wrong.

Now your *heart* determines what you *are*. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' You may

now and then do a thing that seems very good; but it is your  *motive*  and  *aim*  that decide whether it is good or not. What  *led*  you to do it? It is what you  *think* , and  *feel* , and  *wish* , and  *purpose* , that marks out what you really are. And I dare say you are sometimes thankful enough that nobody can see  *that* ; things are often outwardly so good, and yet so bad within.

Now, do you believe this, that God knows your heart, sees you through and through—that He sees your heart as distinctly as others see your face—that all that is passing in your mind is as open to Him as if you spoke it out, or wrote it, or acted it—and that is  *always so* ? 'All things are  *naked*  and  *opened*  unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do,' so that as regards all that is within, each of you can say, 'Thou God seest me!' What does it matter that man does not see, if God sees? Your heart lies all uncovered before God!

II. God sees your  *LIFE* —what you  *do* . Much of what is outward, as well as all that is within, is unseen and unknown by others. Many things are done secretly. We would not wish others to see them. We would not do them if others saw us. If even one eye saw us, we would not. Which of us could bear the idea of his whole life being known and seen by any one, even though that one was his nearest and dearest friend?

I have been in institutions in which a large number of young people are being educated. Looking from the governor's room into the common hall where they work and play and get their meals is a window that commands the whole. He had scarcely to rise from his chair in order to see all that was going on. And  *they knew it* . Every now and then you might see an eye turned to the window, especially if there was anything questionable or wrong going on. And sure enough  *there*  was the face at the window—all was seen by the governor! And yet even in such a case, where there is the sharpest look-out, it is possible to elude observation; things are done which no one sees, which everybody denies, and sometimes it is impossible to find out who has been the wrongdoer.

But  *God sees all* . Nothing escapes His observation. He slumbers not nor sleeps. The most secret thing that any one can do lies open to Him. Every word, though spoken in a whisper, He hears. Every act, however hidden, His eye looks right down upon. In London and other large cities there are places where young people are trained to steal. These become so expert at their evil trade that they could pick your pocket without your knowing it, though you were watching all the time. But there can be nothing of that kind with God. 'For Mine eyes,' He says, 'are upon all their ways; they are not hid from My face, neither is their iniquity hid from Mine eyes' (Jer. xvi. 17). 'Mine eyes are open upon  *all*  the ways of the sons of men' (Jer. xxxii. 19). 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight' (Heb. iv. 13). 'Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?' (Job xxxi. 4). 'For His eyes are upon

the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings' (Job. xxxiv. 21).

III. God sees you  *IN THE DARK* . It is wonderful what an idea most people have of  *darkness*  as covering and hiding things. If any evil thing is to be done, anything that one would be ashamed of, that will not bear the light of day, the thought arises or is suggested by others, 'Wait till night: wait till it is dark'. And then the way seems open. If there is to be any theft, any keeping of bad company, any going to forbidden places, any walking with forbidden people, any doing of wrong things,  *night*  and  *darkness*  seem necessary to cover it. I suppose there is no one who would feel the same restraint, the same difficulty in doing certain things in the dark that he would in broad daylight. Even in doing right things that require some courage in the doing of them we see this. When Nicodemus was anxious about his soul, and wanted to see Jesus, he had not courage to go to Him during the day, but waited till it was dark, and then stole away to Him. 'The same came to Jesus  *by night* ' as perhaps some of us have done.

Now, we need to be reminded that however it may be with men,  *darkness makes no difference to God* . He sees in the dark, just as in the light; so that, so far as He is concerned—and it is mainly with Him we have to do—it is of no use waiting till night, till it is dark. Hear what He says to Ezekiel regarding those who had this notion then: 'Hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do  *in the dark* ? . . . for they say,  *the Lord seeth us not* ' (Ezek. viii. 12). But then, as Hagar put it, He is ' *the God of Seeing* '; and the darkness is not even as the thinnest veil to Him. 'If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me;  *even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee* ' (Ps. cxxxix. 11, 12). There is  *no darkness nor shadow of death*  where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves' (Job. xxxiv. 22). And as if to bring it out more clearly and unmistakably, He says, 'I will search Jerusalem  *as with candles* ' (Zeph. i. 12). 'His eyes are  *as a flame of fire* ' (Rev. i. 14; Dan. x. 6).

IV. God sees you  *IN THE CROWD* . When one wishes  *not*  to be seen, he likes to get into a crowd. We speak of being 'lost in the crowd'. Amid thousands of people it is difficult to follow any one person with the eye, even where you wish, especially if he seeks to get out of your sight. If he is  *alone* , he says, 'I have no chance. I cannot but be seen.' But if there are others on all sides of him, then he feels protected. It makes all the difference when there are  *many*  for feeling as if we were unobserved. If one of you were asked to go up to the platform, from the other end of a large and crowded church or hall, you might say, 'I have not courage for that: every eye would be upon me'. But if twenty were asked to go, there would be no difficulty then. If it were a holiday in the city, and the streets were to be



crowded with thousands from town and country, you might speak of being 'buried out of sight' among the multitude.

But here, too, it is otherwise with God than it is with men. Just as *darkness* makes no difference, so *numbers* make none. Each individual out of ten thousand stands out as distinctly as if there were but the one. You remember how it was with the woman with the issue of blood, who touched the hem of Christ's garment and was healed. Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' Peter, who should have known better, said, 'The multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and how sayest Thou, Who touched Me?' 'But,' it is added, 'the woman *saw that she could not be hid.*' 'He telleth the number of the stars. He calleth them all by their names.' 'Not a sparrow falleth on the ground without your Father.' 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' If you were among a hundred or a thousand others, it would be all one as if there were none but yourself. 'Thou God seest'—not *us*—but '*me*'.

V. God sees you when *ALONE*. A strange feeling of being unobserved, so as to be at liberty to do anything, comes over one when he is *alone*. There is such a sense of solitude that, so far as any one else is concerned, it seems to matter little what one does. I know what terrible temptations some have had in this way. To be left alone with oneself is far more dangerous for some than to be surrounded by the most skillful of tempters. Many have found their way to prison and to ruin just through being left *alone*. They felt there was no control, they fancied there was no danger of detection, and throwing off all restraint, they plunged into sin.

I was once asked by a master to speak to a young servant who had stolen a number of articles when the family were from home. I asked her how it was. She said that when she was alone in the house a strange feeling came over her that she could do anything she liked, and she fell before the temptation.

But when one is most alone, in the most out of the way place, in the remotest corner of the earth—*God sees*. Gehazi, the prophet's servant, thought he was all unobserved when he hurried after Naaman, the Syrian, after he was healed, and by a lying device got money from him, which he stowed away securely, and then presented himself before his master. How he must have been startled when Elisha said, 'Went not *mine heart* with thee?'<sup>1</sup> And so *God* says, 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?'

Will you seek to remember this when you are alone. You may be tempted to take what does not belong to you—to do what you would not do if the eye even of a child were upon you. Don't, I pray you. I wish I could whisper into your ear, '*God* sees you! *His eye* is on you!' It would break the spell—it would burst the chain.

Here is a young chimney-sweeper at his work. He

has come down the wrong chimney, and when he comes out at the fireplace, he finds himself in a handsome library, where a gold watch lies on the table. It seems within his reach; there is nobody to see; his fingers tingle for it. It is the critical moment of his life. It will decide whether he is to be made a *man* of, or to leave that house a *criminal*. What shall help him? What shall save him? Suddenly he sees above the chimney-piece the words, 'Thou God seest me,' and the power of the temptation is broken.

VI. God sees you *EVERYWHERE*. 'The eyes of the Lord are *in every place*, beholding the evil and the good' (Prov. xv. 3). 'The eyes of the Lord *run to and fro throughout the whole earth*' (Chron. xvi. 9). 'Do not I *fill heaven and earth*, saith the Lord' (Jer. xxxiii. 24). 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' There is no place where God cannot see you. Nothing can screen you from His gaze. 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.' They thought themselves secure. But it was not long ere the voice was heard, 'Adam where art thou? What is this that thou hast done?'

When at Kingston, in Canada, some years ago, I visited the state prison there. The prisoners were employed in connection with several public works beyond the confines of the prison. I was struck with their peculiar dress. A line in front and behind divided their clothes—cap and jacket and trousers—into two distinct parts, so that one side was of one colour and the other side of another. The consequence was, that the men were known wherever they went, and if one of them had run off, he would have been recognised everywhere. And just as certainly are we marked out to the eye of God wherever we are. There is no escaping from that Eye.

VII. God sees you *ALWAYS*. There is no moment when He does not see you—night or day—waking or sleeping—alone or in company. You cannot count on a single second in which He is not looking down upon you. It is told of Linnæus, the famous naturalist, that he was greatly impressed with this thought, and that it told on his conversation, his writings, and his conduct. He felt the importance of this so much that he wrote over the door of his study the Latin words: '*Innocui vivite; Numen adest*': 'Live innocently: *God is here*'. We might well have these words before us *everywhere*. I wish our text were inscribed on the walls of every school—of every nursery or bedroom where a child is, so that every day it might meet the eye, and thus the mind be familiarised with it. It might be well to have it in large illuminated letters—sewed, or printed, or painted, or carved; and when the children go from home, they might take it

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings v. 20-27.

with them.—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 55.

### LINGERING LOT

'He lingered.'—GENESIS XIX. 16.

A GREAT many hundred years ago, and a great many hundred miles away from this, two men stood one day looking on a lovely plain, full of rich pasture and dotted here and there with thriving towns. The men were uncle and nephew. They were both wealthy, and had dwelt together for some time. As, however, the number of their flocks and herds greatly increased, disputes arose between some of their men who were engaged in watching and guarding their herds. This was very unpleasant; for you know when disputes arise between servants, each would naturally tell his own master that he was in the right and the other man's servants in the wrong; and so the masters themselves would soon get mixed up in their differences. This uncle and nephew were great friends, and so they thought it would be better to separate than to quarrel. Then one day the uncle, who was Abraham, said to his nephew, whose name was Lot, I will 'give you your choice of which part of the land you would wish to dwell in. You choose your own part, and then I will choose mine.' This was very generous and noble conduct of the older man to give his younger nephew the first choice.

We often can see a good deal of a man's character from the first choice which he makes in life—his selection of where he would like to live, and what companions he cares to have. Well, what choice did Lot make?

He looked from the rising ground on which they were standing, and saw the great plain through which the river Jordan flowed, looking very rich and prosperous. Valleys generally are more fertile than the high ground; so this valley was a striking contrast to the barren hills of Bethel on which they stood. Lot made his choice of that rich and lovely plain, and he set up his tent there, close to the city of Sodom. Now, was that a good choice? Was that a right way to select the place where he and his children would pass their lives? Well, there is no reason whatever why, if a man has a choice, he should not prefer a rich country to a poor one, and a place where he would be likely to prosper to a place where he would probably grow poor. But where Lot went wrong was that *the only thing* he thought about was the wealth which his living in this country might bring him. There are some very important words in the story which immediately follows the statement of Lot's choice. It says, 'The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly'. Now, do you think that Lot did know that? Of course he did; and he should have said to himself, 'The land looks very rich, and I may become still more prosperous in worldly goods if I live there, but I shall be taking my wife and my children and my hundreds of servants all into a very sinful place; and while our bodies prosper, our souls will be in danger, so I will not go'. But Lot lingered

over the loveliness and fruitfulness of the valley; and no doubt he thought that though the people in the towns were sinners exceedingly, there were a great many of them, and they would buy and pay well for all the corn and oil and cattle which he would sell them, so probably he would be all the better off in the end; and as to the people being very sinful—well, he would take care not to join in their sin, and surely a man may be a good man even with a number of heathen people all around him.

Lot soon found out what a dangerous thing it is to choose sinful friends for our companions. One day some neighbouring kings came down with their armies, and in the valley of Siddim they fought all the kings of these Cities of the Plain. The vice and luxury in which these soldiers and people on the plain had lived did the work which luxury and vice always do—they made the people soft and weak and cowardly; and so, in the shock of battle, they were crushed and routed by the harder and manlier men from the mountains, and Lot and all his family, and all his goods, were carried off by the victorious foe. Then his uncle Abraham, with his gallant followers—who had not been weakened or corrupted by dwelling in a rich valley, and in the midst of a wicked and luxurious population—came to the rescue, and he delivered his nephew Lot, and brought him and his family and his flock back safely from the bondage into which they had been taken. That was a warning to Lot. God always sends some warning to His people when they are going to the bad.

Lot does not seem to have taken the warning. Lot lingered there still. What a sad story all this is of 'lingering Lot'. At last the wickedness of all the cities down in the plain became so great that the Lord said, 'I must purify them. I must burn up all the sin and iniquity in them, or it may spread over all the surrounding nations and destroy them.' Fire is the great means by which things are purified. If you take a piece of gold ore, and want to get the pure gold out of it, you put it in a furnace, and the fierce heat burns up all the dross, and lets the gold run out bright and clean. So with fire the Cities of the Plain were to be made clean. Before, however, the fire should descend, Lot and his family were to be warned to leave the city. The reason why God spared Lot is very touching. We are told that 'when God destroyed the Cities of the Plain, that God remembered'—*whom? Lot? No. 'God remembered Abraham,* and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow.' Abraham was Lot's good angel. While Lot was living in the midst of prosperity, and not thinking of any coming danger, good Abraham had been praying for him; and God remembered Abraham, and spared Lot. Oh! boys and girls, as you grow up, and are, perhaps, very careless and thoughtless, and sometimes very sinful, you little think of all the blessing and salvation which may come to you because God remembers some father, mother, pastor who has prayed for you—prayed for you with tears, and entreaty, and a love that you

will understand only when you come to be father or mother, or perhaps pastor, yourself. God remembers *them* and spares *you*.

The story hastens now to its awful close. The people are going on just like hundreds of people in London to-day—very happy in their prosperity, in their rejoicing, and in their sin. The sky seems clear; they think nothing of that dark black cloud gathering in the horizon, which is soon to burst in such a storm of destruction over the city. Messengers came to warn Lot and his family to depart. But sin has been doing its deadly work, and Lot is reluctant to go. 'Lot lingered.' In spite of himself he was made to depart—only just in time. His wife lingered too long; and as the lightnings poured in torrents of fire on the city, and the hurricane swept the flakes of flame and the embers of the burning cities across the plain, they reached her, burnt her to white ashes in a moment, and what had been a few minutes before a living, thinking, human being, stood there like a pillar of white salt in the plain—an awful warning to ages afterwards of the danger of lingering too long over sin. Lot himself barely escaped. A purely worldly choice at the beginning, a neglected warning, a narrow escape from a frightful destruction, a sad and weary and disgraced old age—that is the history of lingering Lot.

The story teaches its own lesson—the danger of lingering in thought or deed with evil. Never linger. If a thing is right, do it; if it is wrong, leave it. Never linger in your thoughts over any sin, however pleasant it looks. Flee from it at once. Lingering in thought on sin will soon lead to your loving it. Never linger over any temptation, no matter what promises of safety it seems to hold out to you. Resist it at once. It is far easier to resist always than to do so only occasionally. The best motto you can learn for life from this sad history of lingering Lot is that one brave word 'Resist'.

I read a story about this word 'Resist' which may help you to remember it. A great tower, called the Tower of Constance, rises up from the fortifications which are on the shores of the Mediterranean, on the south coast of France. In the reign of Louis XIV. a number of Protestant women were imprisoned in this tower because they would not renounce their faith to please the king. There is in this building one gloomy, dark chamber where these poor brave women passed many years of their life; and there a noble woman, Marie Duran, whose only crime was that her brother was a Protestant pastor, cut deep into the hard stone of the pavement, with some rude instrument or scrap of iron, this one word—RESIST. She spent forty years in that prison, and we are told that 'her great consolation was in carving this word for any one who should come hereafter to read it there'.

May God Himself write that word deep on the warm, fresh, loving young hearts that are here to-day—RESIST.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 61.

## LITTLE THINGS

'Is it not a little one?'—GENESIS XIX. 20.

1. **Little Steps make Long Journeys.**—Expect it was not first time Lot had said that—perhaps the secret of his ruin. Genesis XIII. 11, 'Dont like leaving Abraham, but it can't *much* matter'. 12, 'Best to pitch tent with door opening *away* from Sodom, but after all more cheerful this way, and it makes such a *little* difference'. 'Surely you won't go any nearer.' 'May as well live inside the city; it is but a *small* change after all.' So little by little, step by step, from wealth, prosperity, friendship with Abraham, to ruin, and a cave to cower in (XIX. 30). [Cf. Eve—*looked, listened, longed, touched, took, tasted.*] Man may walk thousand miles, but he has to do it step by step. Each step small enough, but if in the wrong direction where will many small steps lead to?

II. **Little Seeds yield Great Harvests.**—Little things not only add up, they grow and multiply. Something like what Isaiah says (LX. 22), and true of bad things as well as good ones.

[Seed on palm of hand—mere speck—no consequence 'there'. Brush it off. Twenty years later. 'What is this?' 'A tree.' 'However came it here?' 'You planted it when you swept aside that seed.']

Ever thought of this: *We are always sowing seeds.*

1. *Thoughts.*—Come to us, like seed blown by the wind—need not keep them, but *may*, if think them over, ponder on them, that is *sowing* them in mind. Then they will grow.

(a) *Good thoughts.*—[Coming after Jesus was a thought once in the mind of Andrew. If he had not sown it Simon might never have been Peter. Peter's work and writings the fruit in part of that seed.]

[Once no Sunday schools in England. Show how they grew from a thought.]

(b) *Bad thoughts.*—Seen already—Lot, Eve. Trace growth of Rebecca's thought, 'I *must* have that blessing for my boy'.

2. *Words.*—These are thoughts sown outside of us, in minds of other people it may be.

May treat as under last head (1) *Good words.* [God's made the world; Christ's have been saving men ever since they were spoken; or take some simple anecdote of power of a good word.] (2) *Bad words.* [Illustrate in a similar way.] Cf. Matthew XII. 36, 37.

3. *Actions.*—Rather a bigger kind of words. [All seeds not same size, though all small.]

As before may take *good* and *bad*. The harvest from a small bad action may be illustrated thus: Boy inattentive in class, plays, example makes the rest fidgety. Teacher disturbed and worried. When he gets back home, cross, makes family uncomfortable. Go to church, inattentive, distract attention of others. Perhaps fifty people disturbed two hours later by the ripple of discomfort that boy set going.



So see how important these small things—small steps, long journeys; small seeds, great harvests; and we are *always* doing *little* things. What care then we ought to take! [Fancy if in powder magazine, and like a cat with sparks coming out all over you, what a fright you would be in, what care you would take!] 'Is it not a little one?' Yes; but what sized thing will come of it?

Best safeguard is to pray. Say, 'Lord, I can't help always doing little things, taking little steps, sowing little seeds. Show me how to walk. Teach me how to sow. Only if Thou take care of me can I keep from doing harm!'—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 114.

### BIBLE LADS

GENESIS XXI. 16, 17.

THERE are several bright little lads mentioned in Scripture whose experience and service may guide and help the boys and girls who read this. They hold, as it were, a lamp with a shining light across the path of all who are following in their footsteps. The Holy Spirit has introduced these interesting lads, no doubt, to teach us a few clear lessons of *prayer, obedience, blessing, activity, and service.*

I. We first meet a **Suffering Lad** in Genesis xxi. 16, 17, who shows us the value of *Prayer.*

'And God heard the voice of the lad' . . . 'and God was with the lad.' He cried in his suffering and distress, and the Lord heard him. 'Crying' is the natural way for a child to make known its needs to its father, whilst 'Praying' is the cry of our souls to our Heavenly Father. The Lord always hears us (Ps. xxxiv. 6).

II. The **Submissive Lad** comes next, in Genesis xlii. 5, with *Obedience* as his motto.

'And I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you.' The secret of Isaac's happy, peaceful life was his willing obedience to God. Isaac was an example of obedience. 'They went both of them together,' a lesson of loving submission, 'and laid him on the altar'; a light to the Lord Jesus, 'God will provide Himself a lamb'.

III. Now let us notice the **Saving Lad**, in Genesis xliii. 8, who is a *Blessing.*

Little Benjamin was the centre of interest, the link of blessing, and the bond of union. No corn, nor happiness, nor hope, without him. In these particulars Benjamin is a picture of the Lord Jesus, and a help to every boy. Every true Christian is a link of blessing to others.

IV. The **Selected Lad**, in 1 Samuel xx. 36, teaches us the value of *Activity.*

'And he said unto his lad, Run and find out now the arrows.' This willing, active lad did a great work in Israel that day. He was a signal of warning to David, 'Is not the arrow beyond thee?' a smart servant for Jonathan, 'Make speed, haste, stay not'; and a saviour of a king and a kingdom, even though he knew it not (verse 39).

Every Christian boy should be active for Jesus, and always ready to help and be kind to others.

V. There is one more, the **Serving Lad**, in John vi. 9. *Service* is his lesson to us.

There were three things which fitted this lad for service. He was following Jesus. He was in the right place—close to Jesus. He had five loaves and two fishes. He had the right things—grace and gifts. He was found willing to lend them to Jesus. He had the right spirit—a willing heart.

These are the qualifications needed for the Lord's service. We must be *near, prepared, and willing.* 'Who will be the next to follow Jesus?'

This lad would have delighted John Wesley, whose advice is: 'Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. To all the people you can. In all the ways you can. In all places you can. As long as ever you can.'

When Count Zinzendorf was a little boy at school he founded a small Guild amongst his schoolfellows, which he called the 'Order of the Grain of Mustard-seed,' and thereafter that seedling grew into the great brotherhood, now known by the name of Moravians, who have proved such a blessing to the world.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tucks for Tiny Folks*, p. 31.

### INFANT VOICES IN PRAYER

'And God heard the voice of the lad.'—GENESIS XXI. 17.

IF you had lived four thousand years ago, or thereabouts, you might have gone down one day to a very dreary place, where it was all hot sand, and only some scrubby bushes, not far from a place called 'Beer-sheba'. And if you had gone down to that wretched place, you would have seen a sad sight. You would have seen a poor woman. Her master had turned her out of his tent; he had given her a little bread and a pitcher of water, and the poor woman had gone a little way, until all the water was gone. It would almost have made you cry to see her; she was so thirsty, she looked so faint, so weak. And she lifted up her voice, and cried aloud. And if you had gone a little farther, about as far as you could shoot an arrow, you would have seen another very bad sight indeed. There was a boy, he was lying under one of those shrubs, and he was worse off than his mother, poor boy—he had no water. He was almost dying. And while his poor mother was crying out with all her might, this boy did the best thing he could do—he prayed to God. *And God heard him.* And God sent down an angel, and the angel came to his mother, and the angel said, 'Don't leave your boy there.' She had put him under a bush, because she could not bear to see him die; she could not endure his cries, so she put him away out of her hearing. But the angel said, 'Don't leave him there. Go, and take him up; carry him in your arms'. God said, 'I will take care of him. He shall be a great man by and by.' And the angel said, 'Look there!' (She could not see it before.) 'There is a well of water close to you.' And she



saw the well, and she went and filled her pitcher with water, and saved her son, saved it to drink, and they became quite happy.

What was the name of that woman? 'Hagar.' What was the name of that boy? 'Ishmael.' God heard that little boy under the shrub. He saved himself and his mother by his prayers. Dear boy!

Does God hear the prayers of boys and girls? Does He not? Somebody said (I don't suppose it's quite true, but it teaches something that is quite true) that God was once listening to an archangel singing, and God said, 'Archangel, stop! There's a little child praying on earth; let Me hear him.' I believe God would as soon hear a little child as an archangel.

When a good and great man, Melanchthon, was once going to difficult business, and was in great trouble, he heard some children praying, and he said, 'Be of good cheer, brother, the great ones are praying for us!'

I want this afternoon to talk to you about *boys' and girls' prayers*—your prayers. There is one thing often said I do not like—do you? A person says to you, 'Say your prayers'. I do not like that expression. It is like a person saying a lesson. Prayers are not a lesson. I do not 'say my prayers'. I advise you never to use that expression, 'saying prayers'. Say *pray*—'I pray'; not, 'I say my prayers'; not, 'Have you said your prayers?' but, 'Have you *prayed*?' Let us not talk about 'saying prayers', like a lesson, or like a parrot, but let us think about *praying*—a different thing altogether. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; and when you pray, you speak to God. One is the echo of the other. There must be an echo. If you do not read your Bible, I do not think you will pray properly; but if you read your Bible, and God speaks to you, then it is true prayer when you speak to God.

What is praying? A minister once said to a boy, 'Can you pray? How did you pray?' He said, 'Sir, *I begged*'. He could not have used a better word, '*I begged*'. Praying is begging of God. You know what a beggar does. He says, 'Oh, do—do give me something!' He goes on saying it. 'You have given me something once; give me something again.' That is a very good argument, which a beggar often makes use of.

There was a woman who had been a heathen in New Zealand. She had learnt to pray; somebody said to her, 'Woman, how do you pray?' And she replied, 'I lay myself down flat upon a promise, and look up. Do you understand? I have got a promise underneath me. Then I look up.' That is prayer.

I will tell you what prayer is very much like. It is like a bow. Do you see how. What is the arrow? A promise. What is the string? Faith. What is the hand pulling the string? You. You use your faith; with your faith you send a promise up to the skies. David said, 'I will make my prayer and *look up*,' look up and see where the arrow comes down

again. It will come down somewhere. That is prayer—sending up the arrow. Use your bow.

Now I am going to speak about a little baby's prayer, a little tiny child's prayers; then I shall speak about big boys' and girls' prayers.

Supposing a very little tiny boy or girl, just able to talk—what is the nicest way for that little baby to pray, though only just able to speak? To kneel at his mother's lap. Oh, it is such a pretty sight. And if the mother cannot hear the child, or the father, then why should not the elder brother or elder sister? they will do very nicely; only the little baby must kneel in somebody's lap, and then the little baby kneeling down must have something to say; it cannot, perhaps, think much for itself—it may a little. I will tell you what I should put into a little baby's prayer—what I mean.

A little baby once said, 'Keep me from fire; keep me from robbers; keep me from naughty boys. Amen.' I heard it.

Another little baby once said, 'Jesus, kiss me!' That was his prayer. Would you like that? That was a little baby's prayer. I think it would be better if an elder boy or girl, or if father or mother would tell the little baby something to say.

A very little child, when going to bed at night, should be taught something like this: teach it to say, 'O God! I thank Thee for this happy day. O God, forgive me for being naughty! O God, take care of me to-night. O God, bless father, mother, brothers, and sisters, for Jesus Christ's sake.' That would be quite long enough, perhaps too long. That is the way I think every little child can pray. There is nobody in this church who cannot pray that prayer. You must think of something to say, or else father, mother, brother, or sister must help you, tell you what to pray.

And now I will speak to you about big boys and girls like most of you—how you should pray. Will you attend, please, to what I wish to say about your prayers, when you are going to bed. I do not much care whether you say your prayers before you undress or after you have undressed, just before you get into bed; I am not sure which is best. When you pray in the morning, I would certainly advise you to dress before you pray. Say your prayers when you have dressed. I should advise you *always to kneel down*. I hope nobody in this church ever says their prayers in bed! It is so disrespectful to God, and so lazy a thing; I do not think God would listen to them. *It is a very wrong thing to say prayers in bed!* Kneel down; always kneel. I will give you a little hint. I would advise you, so far as you can, always to say your prayers in the same spot of your bedroom, by the side of your bed, or by a little chair or table. Don't think it will spoil your trousers. I have known boys care more about their trousers than they care for God. Kneel down. Then, when you have knelt down, let me give you one or two bits of advice—not what to say; I am not going to presume to tell you what to say, you must think for yourself—but just a

little advice as to prayer. Remember you are always to pray to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, the Son, for God the Holy Ghost. Every prayer ought to be something like that—to the Father, through the Son, for the Spirit.

There are a great many things to think of in prayer. Let me tell you of one or two.

You should always first address God by one of His names or titles in a very reverent way. Then, you know, you have different things to do. You have to thank God for your mercies; you have to confess to God your sins; you have to trust God to bless you; you have to ask (whatever you like to ask) Him to do all for you; you have to ask for other people—always put intercession into your prayer; then, to end all, 'For Jesus Christ's sake.' Never leave that out. It would almost spoil the prayer if you left that out. Now, that you may do all this, that you may have all the right parts of prayer, the right divisions, you must always tune the instrument before you play.

I am told when the Shah of Persia was in England and was attending one of the great concerts in London, in the Albert Hall, he was asked what part he liked the best, and he said 'he liked best all that tuning of the instruments before the concert began'. That was very bad taste of him to say, 'I think all the noise of the tuning of the instruments the best part'; but he said so. I am sure God likes to hear the instruments tuned; the mind brought into a right state; to be thinking, 'I am going into the presence of God; I am a poor sinner! What have I done? What have I to thank Him for? What do I want?' Then tell God anything you like; anything in the world, only take care you ask it all in the name of Jesus—because we have no promise to prayer that God will hear us unless we add the name of Jesus to it.

I will just tell you what I heard about the name of Jesus. A clergyman was sent for to see a poor woman who was very unhappy, very miserable. And the clergyman said to her, 'Why have you sent for me? What do you want me for?' She said, 'Oh! sir, I am so unhappy, quite miserable about my sins. I am very wretched'. The clergyman said, 'Is that all? Why, you are only telling me about yourself. Have you nothing else to tell me?' She said, 'No, sir'. Then the minister said, 'Say *Jesus*'. And the woman said, 'Jesus!' And he said, 'That won't do. Say it again.' And again she said, 'Jesus!' just as before. The clergyman again said, 'That won't do, you must say it with all your heart, as if you felt it. Say heartily, "*Jesus!*" say it with all your heart.' And she did, and from that moment she got peace, only from the name of 'Jesus!' saying it heartily. This is a true story, and it only shows the *power of the name of Jesus!*—that beautiful name, that blessed Name! Never let there be a prayer without it. *There is the power of prayer.*

But I know very well how difficult a thing it is to pray. I want to talk to you about your difficulties in prayer. One difficulty is to know what to say, to

get right thoughts. I heard of two ministers who were praying at a prayer meeting. They were kneeling together, and one of the ministers, in the middle of his prayer, stopped, and whispered to the other minister, 'I don't know what to say'. The other minister said, 'Tell God that. Tell Him you don't know what to say'. He told God, and God gave Him something to say at once. If you have not thoughts in prayer, tell God that, and perhaps He will give you thoughts.

You may say, 'Perhaps I have thoughts, but I have no words'. That makes me speak to you about something else. I think every boy and girl ought to have a form of prayer, though they need not always use it. I look upon it as if you were almost a lame man; you can walk a little, if so, 'tis very good to have a pair of crutches. Use *your crutches when you want them*. If you do not want your crutches, do not use them. The best way is to say what you think at the time when you are praying in your own room; but if you find you have not words, it is a very good thing to have a book of prayer, or something you have learnt to say. Have a form of prayer. If any one has a prayer to use, he will not want the crutch; it is better without it. A Psalm is sometimes very good. There are no prayers in the world like the prayers in our Prayer Book. You can use those. I think you will find the more you practise, the more you will have to say out of your heart.

Then, I will tell you another great thing. Did you ever find, when you kneel in prayer, and mean to pray quite right, that your thoughts are gone off, I don't know where, but where you think about something quite different—*wandering thoughts*? Do you find that? I do. They are great troubles. Abraham once knew what this was. He was offering up a sacrifice, and, while he was doing so, the birds came flying down on the altar, and took away the meat—spoil the sacrifice. I think those little thoughts, those foolish thoughts, those wandering thoughts, are like those birds. We must drive away those little birds; we must not have them, or they will spoil the sacrifice. If your thoughts are wandering from you, ask God to keep off the wandering thoughts, and if they don't go away, get up from your knees, and feel, 'I have knelt down and said a prayer, but I have not felt it'. Kneel down, and pray it again.

I knew a good man who said that very often he had not said the Lord's Prayer right till he had said it seven times. *Don't be beaten*. If the enemy will put wandering thoughts into your mind to stop your praying, pray on, pray on! Then perhaps he'll give it up. That is the best thing to do.

Now, when you are saying your prayers, always recollect that there is One who is offering that prayer for you to God. That prayer does not go to God just as you send it up; but before it gets to the throne of God it gets much sweeter. There is something mixed with it, if you are a Christian boy or girl.

Somebody says, 'When we bring our poor nosebags

to Jesus, He takes out all the weeds, and gives God only the flowers'.

If I wanted to ask anything of the Queen, if I could get the Prince of Wales to offer my letter to the Queen, or put my petition before the Queen, I should think, though the Queen might not receive me, yet if the Prince of Wales *asked for me*, I should get what I wanted.

We have got somebody better than the Prince of Wales, the Son of the King of kings, who has promised to offer to His Father everything we ask Him. He puts His sweet incense into our prayer. So God will be pleased with us for His sake. Always think that Jesus is presenting your prayer for you.

But there is another thing about prayer. *When* are we to pray? *When*—*when*? Morning and night; also at midday. It is a very nice thing to pray in the middle of the day. If you can, go up into your room, then, and have a little prayer; it will be a great help.

But I say, *pray always*. How is that to be done? Can you kneel down in the middle of the road or street, and pray? A Mohammedan would not be ashamed to do so. But we *all* should be ashamed to pray anywhere, though a Mohammedan would not. But you can *pray in your heart*, though you do not kneel down. Little prayers in your heart can always be going up; nothing can stop that. You can do that anywhere. We call those ejaculatory prayers. That is a hard word; it means 'little darts'. I love these little darts. If you have never tried them, try those little darts out of your heart: say, 'Lord, I have done wrong!' 'O God, forgive me!' These little darts, ejaculations, can be sent up anywhere, at any time.

Do you know how you breathe? Now, try; draw a breath; take a long breath. You take in the air, and then you send it out again. That is breathing. And praying is in the same way. When you pray, take in the mercies; and when you have got them, breathe out the praise. Prayer, praise.

You cannot live without your lungs. If you do not pray, you cannot live spiritually—your soul cannot exist. Prayer is breathing in; praise is breathing out. You must breathe.

I should like to tell you of two remarkable answers to prayer, which I heard of, in boys. But I do not think I will tell you both now—you will be too tired; but I will tell you one, and the other another time. The first answer to the prayer of a little boy that I will tell you of was that of a very pious boy, who loved God, and loved prayer; and he had a sister who did not. His sister never read the Bible; he did, and loved it. There was a prayer-meeting connected with his church, and the little boy said to his minister, 'Please, sir, would you mind, at the next prayer-meeting, saying that there is a little boy who wishes very much that his sister would read the Bible? Would you be kind enough to pray for my sister, that she may begin to love her Bible?' The minister said, 'Of course, we shall be most happy to

do so'. So at the next meeting the little boy was there, and the minister prayed for his sister (he did not mention her name), that she might begin to read her Bible. And when the minister had prayed the prayer, the little boy got up to go out. The minister said, 'Sit still. It is not right to move in the midst of the prayer-meeting. Sit still, or you will disturb the people!' The little boy said, 'I must go, sir. I want to go and see my little sister read the first chapter in the Bible she has ever read in all her life!' And he went, and he found that the prayer had been already answered, for his sister was reading the Bible when he got home.

I will tell you the other story another time.

Do you know?—when the missionaries went out to New Zealand, some of the New Zealanders became Christians, and began to pray. They could not well pray in their homes, because they would be disturbed, and perhaps killed; so they used to go out into the woods, and say their prayers there. Each one had his particular spot in the woods where he prayed. In the middle of the wood they trod down the grass in several places, and if any man neglected to go to prayer, the grass grew on the neglected spot; so they got to say one to another, when this happened, these Christian New Zealanders, '*Brother, the grass is growing in your path*'. That meant, 'You have not been to the praying-place'.

Do you think I have got to say that to anybody in this church this afternoon?—'My dear boy, the grass is growing in your path. My dear girl, the grass is growing in your path. *You have not used your knees much!* You have not prayed much lately. You have not prayed aright.' Is it so? What does conscience say? Is 'the grass growing in your path'?

In the Yellow Country, what do you think is the name of prayer? 'The gift of the knees.' Is not that beautiful? 'O God, give us all that—the gift of the knees!' Perhaps somebody will say, 'I cannot pray'. *It is a gift!* Ask God for it—'the gift of the knees'. 'O God, GIVE US ALL THE GIFT OF THE KNEES!'—J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (5th Series), p. 105.

## THE HIDDEN WELL

GENESIS XXI. 19.

BIBLE stories remind me of two exhibitions which greatly delighted me when I was a boy. One was '*Cosmorama*,' which means 'View of the World'. You went into a dark gallery, and through large windows you beheld pictures, so well painted that they looked like reality. One window showed you Paris; another Rome; a third, a Swiss village with snow-peaked mountains; a fourth, the bank of a great American river, and so on. The other exhibition was called '*Camera Obscura*,' which means 'Dark Chamber'. You went into a dark room, and on a sort of glass table you beheld a moving coloured picture of the scenery outside. The trees waved, the clouds floated across the sky, the people moved about, some remaining awhile in the picture, then slowly



departing; others quickly crossing it and vanishing. It was a living picture.

Now, only imagine how delightful it would be, if there were a wonderful window through which we could look not only into distant countries, but into distant times; and see moving about before our eyes the people who lived and died thousands of years ago, when this dear country of ours was not yet named 'England,' and was mostly a wilderness of forests, moors, and marshes! Well, the Bible stories may be likened to such a wonderful *Cosmorama* and *Camera* in one; only we have to look at the pictures they set before us not with our bodily eyes but with our mind's eyes. And what is best of all, these histories tell us not only what the people they speak of did and said, but what they thought; and what God thought of them, and said to them.

Come now with me; open your 'mind's eyes,' and let us look through this wonderful window into the past. What do we see?

**The Picture.**—We see a wide desolate wilderness, on which the blazing sunshine is poured down as if the sky were a vast furnace. Mountains meet our eye whichever way we look; some near, some far away. Long wavy lines of mountain on the horizon, silvery grey or pale purple. In nearer view, towering cliffs and rugged peaks of bare rock, and awful precipices, strangely coloured with dull crimson, orange, and violet. The level ground in front in some places shows grass parched with the sun; in others shingle or rock, hard and hot as if baked in an oven. Here and there is a tree, or a cluster of bushes. In the distance you may see one or two groves of lofty palms. Near them are flocks of gazelles feeding. Troops of wild asses gallop past, rejoicing in their desert freedom. Nowhere can you espy a hut or tent, road or bridge, hedge or fence. There is no token of human presence, save only two lonely travellers, moving wearily and uncertainly as if they had lost their way. One of them is a dark-skinned, black-haired woman, with great dark eyes, thick lips, a proud, handsome, sorrowful face, having an empty kid-skin, such as Arabs use to carry water, slung across her shoulders. The other is a strong-limbed, keen-eyed, noble-looking lad of about sixteen, who totters as if ready to faint. Their lips are dry and cracked, their tongues so parched they can scarcely speak. Their skin feels as if it would peel off; their heads as if they would burst. Everything around them—rocks, bushes, mountains—all seem swimming in a bath of heat. The water is all spent in their bottle; not a drop left; and they know that if they cannot find water they must die. Strong as the lad is, he has to lean on his mother's arm. She is more used to the desert than he, and better able to bear the torturing thirst. She guides the lad's unsteady steps to a bush which casts a short shadow, lays him down there, almost as if he were a baby again; and then goes and sits down under another bush, 'a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said "Let me not see the death of the child".'

She bursts into a loud passion of weeping, utterly heart-broken. It seems to her that all the world has turned against her; God seems to have forgotten her, and forgotten His promises; and she and her darling son, whom she was so proud of, are thrust out to die.

Did you ever see a sadder picture? A true one, remember. There was a day, an hour, a moment, when all this was 'now'; and the thousands of years that have since rolled away had not yet begun.

**The Mystery.**—It is as strange as sad. Not that there would be anything strange in two travellers losing their way and dying of thirst in those pathless Arabian deserts. Alas! that has but too often happened. It would happen much oftener, but that when people have to travel through the desert, they join in companies, and have guides who know where the wells and springs of water are to be found. How, then, came this mother and son to be wandering thus, without guide or helper? Here comes the strange, mysterious part of the story. Even a poor man would not like to send away one he cared for on a journey across that wild desert without an experienced guide, well armed against robbers, and a camel, or at least an ass, to carry food and water. No one but a cruel, wicked man would desire that even his enemies should die so dreadful a death as perishing of thirst in the wilderness. Yet the person who has sent these two wanderers forth from the plenty and safety and comfort which until now they have always enjoyed is one of the richest men in the whole country, and the best and most pious man in the whole world: Abraham, called for his piety, the Friend of God! The woman is Hagar, Abraham's wife; and the lad is Abraham's son, Ishmael.

Abraham could easily have spared a few camels and asses, laden with abundant provision; and half a dozen strong, trusty shepherds, to have guided Hagar and her boy safe across the desert to her native land of Egypt. Yet they were turned out alone, on foot, with just as much bread and water as they could carry; and having lost their way (as it was likely they would do), they had no prospect but to die, with no eye to pity them, and leave their bodies to be speedily devoured by vultures and hyænas.

Strangest of all, this was by God's own command! The Bible says 'the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son'. Well it might be. Perhaps it was the greatest trial of his life, except the one crowning trial, twenty years or more afterwards, when God told him to sacrifice his darling Isaac. But Abraham knew that God must have wise reasons for what He commanded, and that his part was to obey, mystery or no mystery. So he rose up early in the morning, and did just as God told him; and then left the matter in God's hand. He knew that God had promised to bless Ishmael, and to make him the ancestor of twelve princes and of a great nation. He knew also that, come what might, God's promise could not be broken. It seemed hard, very



hard, for Hagar and Ishmael to be driven out, almost like beggars, from amidst all the wealth which Abraham's camp contained. It was very mysterious. But God so ordered it; and that was enough. God must have His own good reasons, as He always has, though neither Abraham nor Hagar nor Ishmael could understand what those reasons were.

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain:  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

**How it Came About.**—Let us go back in the story for a few years, and see how it all came about.

In those old times a custom had grown up (as in Mohammedan countries at the present day) for a man to have more wives than one. It was not pleasing to God, and usually turned out very unhappily; but still the law did not forbid it. For many years Abraham had but one wife, Sarah; but as they had no child, Sarah at length gave Hagar, an Egyptian bondmaid, or slave, to be a second wife; not at all intending Hagar to be equal with herself, but thinking that if Hagar had a son, she (that is Sarah) would reckon him as her own boy. So it turned out. God gave Hagar a son, of whom she was not a little proud; and Sarah adopted him as her own. Abraham also loved him tenderly; and called his name Ishmael, which means 'God will hear'. Almost the same name, you see, as Samuel; which means 'heard by God'. Until he was about fourteen years old, Ishmael was Abraham's only son. A great pet, I dare say, he was among Abraham's many shepherds and other servants and their children. As he played with them among the tents, or in the pastures where the flocks and herds were feeding, and by the brooks and wells where the shepherds led them to watering, he would make the other boys obey him, and do what he chose; and they would say to him, 'You are our little chief, our master's son'. 'Some day,' he used to think, 'when my father grows very old and dies, all this camp and these servants and herds and flocks will be mine!' So I am afraid he grew proud, selfish, and self-willed. It is very dangerous for any of us, young or old, but especially while we are young, to have our own way in everything. And therefore it is often much safer to be poor than to be rich.

At length God gave Sarah a son of her own, as He had promised, whom Abraham named 'Isaac,' which means 'he shall laugh'; because there was such great joy at his birth. Not joy for Ishmael, however, for now he found this little baby set above him, and learned that Isaac, not he, would be heir of Abraham's wealth. It would have been very brave and noble of Ishmael, and very pleasing in God's sight, if he had loved his little brother, notwithstanding his disappointment, and said, 'Never mind; if God appoints it so it must be all right; and my

father will still care for me, though I am not to have his wealth'.

Do you think you could have been so noble and gentle and self-denying if you had been in Ishmael's place?

There were not wanting, I dare say, those who were foolish and wicked enough to stir up and encourage Ishmael's proud and envious feelings; and to tease and provoke him by saying, 'You are nobody now: this new little baby will be lord of all; and nobody will care for you!' Poor Ishmael! I pity him. It is always difficult enough to do right, and to keep down envious evil temper; and if you hearken to bad or foolish companions, it grows ten times more difficult. But, you know, right is right, and wrong is wrong, for all that. The harder you find it to do right, and to conquer your own temper, the more earnestly you must ask God's help. The sharper the conflict, the nobler the victory. 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'

Ishmael, I fear, did not try to rule his spirit. St. Paul says he 'persecuted' poor little Isaac; an innocent little baby, who knew no reason why his brother should hate him. The story in Genesis says that when Abraham made a feast in honour of his little son, at that time between two and three years old, Sarah saw Ishmael 'mocking': not in good-humoured play, but in bitter anger, turning the whole thing into ridicule, forgetting all the respect due to his father; all that was generous, kind, or dutiful.

Sarah took alarm. She saw that it would never do to let the two boys grow up together. Ishmael never would be happy; and by and by there might be a fierce quarrel, with consequences too dreadful to think of. Abraham was deeply grieved. He took his trouble in prayer to God, according to his custom. Then came this strange mysterious command: he must send away Ishmael and his mother from their home, with two or three days' provision of bread and water, to journey alone through the wild terrible wilderness. And now we come back to where we left them: Ishmael lying on the ground under the shrub, a little refreshed with the rest and shade; and his mother at a distance under another bush, weeping, heart-broken, too much in despair even to pray.

**Ishmael's Prayer.**—In this dreadful danger, what was Ishmael to do? Just what Hagar should have done. Just what you and I ought to do in every danger, trouble, or difficulty. He prayed. 'God heard the voice of the lad.' The Bible does not say that God heard Hagar's voice, though she 'lifted up her voice and wept'. Why does it say, twice over, that God heard the voice of Ishmael? Of course, God hears everything. Every word you speak—every kind, gentle, helpful word; every cross, unjust, foolish word—God hears, however softly spoken. But when the Bible speaks of God *hearing the voice* of any one, it means, attending to and answering prayer. Ishmael's voice was too faint to reach his mother's ear, but God heard it. Ishmael had been

taught to pray; for God said of Abraham, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord'. But you may well believe Ishmael had never prayed before as he prayed then. Perhaps he said, 'Let me try if my name, "Ishmael," speaks true. Will God hear?' Did he deserve to be heard? He could not think so. His own misconduct had brought him and his mother into this frightful trouble; and that was the worst of it. What may we suppose his prayer like, if we could have heard it? Perhaps something like this:—

'O Lord God of my father Abraham! Have pity on me. Have pity on my poor mother. I have been foolish and wicked. It is all my fault. But Thou art my father Abraham's God. He is Thy friend, and I am his son, though I have been an undutiful son. O Lord, for my father's sake have mercy on us. We are dying of thirst. O God, have mercy on us, and send us some water that my mother may not die!'

Very likely good old Abraham, far away in his tent, with aching heart, was praying too for his poor wanderers. But it tells us nothing about that.

'God heard the voice of the lad. And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.'

How quickly the answer came; and how easily! God often keeps His children waiting long for answers to prayer; but that is only when it is best for them to wait. The well was there all the time; near at hand, full of refreshing water. But it was hidden. Hagar, blinded with her tears, could not see it till 'God opened her eyes'; that is, helped her to see it. Do you ask, How? Perhaps she suddenly noticed that in one spot the grass was greener than in the parched ground elsewhere, showing that water lurked there in some deep hiding-place. Perhaps she saw footprints in the sand, of men and of flocks, which she had not noticed before, and these pointed to the hidden well. Perhaps some block of stone, half hidden in sand, which before seemed only like the other bits of rock strewn about, suddenly looked to her as if it could be moved; and she found it the cover of the well. Arab shepherds are accustomed to cover their wells carefully, and hide them, if they can, from passers-by. But no one can hide what God chooses to make plain; and there is no eye-salve like prayer. God did not need to work a miracle to answer Ishmael's prayer. He only needed to enable Hagar to see what was already provided. In a few minutes all their trouble was over. As they drank, and drank again, new life seemed to flow through all their veins. Soon they were strong enough to journey, rejoicing in this great deliverance, which told them that God had not forgotten them; and encouraged them to trust Him for all time to come.

'God was with the lad,' the Bible tells us. Ishmael grew up brave and strong and free, in the wild desert, where his descendants dwell to this day. Often, perhaps, in after years, he may have passed the hidden well, and stopped to drink of it, remembering the lesson he had there learned of faith in his father's God. It is pleasant to know that more than seventy years afterwards, when Abraham died, Ishmael and Isaac (not even then very old men, as men's ages were then reckoned) met as brothers and mourned together by their father's grave.

**A Dip Into the Well.**—Truth, the proverb says, lies in a well; and in this hidden well which Ishmael's prayer uncovered, lies many a true lesson, if only we have the right sort of pitcher to dip and draw.

First of all: how came the well to be there, just where and when it was wanted? The Arab shepherds who dug it never meant it for wandering travellers, but for their own flocks. Hagar and Ishmael, when they lost their way and wandered on in despair, did not know that every weary step, every miserable moment, was leading them to the water for which they were thirsting. God meant that well for them, and guided their feet towards it. He led them by a way they knew not. He kept the well hidden until the deliverance could come in answer to prayer. Then, in a moment, He opened Hagar's eyes, and behold! there was the well close at hand.

Life is full of hidden wells: stored up blessings, ready at the right moment to supply the answer to prayer. Many a weary broken-hearted wanderer who has missed his way in life—many a busy traveller along the hot dusty highways of the world, passes close by a well of living water, and sees it not. Why? Because he does not pray. 'Ye have not because ye ask not.' Often, too, when we do pray, the answer comes so quickly and naturally, that we are tempted to say, 'I need not have prayed!' Never say that. Never think it. God foresees our prayers as well as our necessities. Our Heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of, *before we ask Him*. But he says, 'Ask, and ye shall receive'. And as the light of the Pole-star which meets the traveller's eye and guides his steps, started on its swift journey thousands of years ago; so if need were, God would have prepared thousands of years ago the answer to even a child's prayer, rather than break His promise.

Another truth we draw from Ishmael's well is this: our encouragement to pray is not our own goodness, but God's. Ishmael's trouble was of his own making. He could not fancy that he deserved to be heard. But he knew that the Lord had spared his cousin Lot in answer to Abraham's prayer, and would even have spared Sodom if there had been ten good men in it: surely then He would spare Abraham's own son. How much stronger is our encouragement to pray, who can plead not the name of Abraham, or any earthly parent or friend, but the name of Jesus, God's own dear Son! 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for

us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'

What a little thing a draught of cold water is! But to one dying of thirst it is the most precious thing in the world. All the gold and jewels on earth would be despised in comparison. Learn from this not to think little things of no importance, or to suppose that God thinks so; and not to be afraid (as some people are) to pray to God about little things as well as great.

I will give you two reasons which prove that God does not disdain to attend to little things: *First*, because He has made many more little things than great, and has made the greatest things to depend on the least. Worlds are made up of atoms; forests spring from acorns, and harvests from grains of seed. Events which change the history of the world may grow out of one little thought in one poor man's mind. Little duties, little sins, little joys, little troubles, make up most of our daily life. Therefore 'in EVERY THING . . . let your requests be made known unto God' (Phil. iv. 6).

*Secondly*, God is so great, that the difference between what we call 'great' and 'little' is to Him as nothing; and He is so wise that nothing—not a thought or an atom—is small enough to escape His eye.

To Him is nothing great, is nothing small: He guides the comet's course, He marks the sparrow's fall.

Is there in your heart any secret trouble, or wish, or temptation, which you do not like to tell even to your dearest friend? Tell it to your Heavenly Father. Tell it to the Lord Jesus. The Eye that saw Ishmael fainting under the bush reads your heart. The Ear that was open to his prayer is open to yours. God will not, indeed, grant requests which are either wrong, hurtful, or foolish. But it is ours to pray; it is His to judge if it be wise and right to give what we ask; and if not, we must trust to Him to do better for us than we can either ask or think.

Prayer is itself a *hidden well*: a secret source of joy and strength and wisdom, not only in times of trouble, but always. Trouble is a hard teacher, though its lessons are precious. Do not wait for it to drive you to prayer; but say like the Psalmist, 'O God, thou art MY God: early will I seek thee'.

Sinful pleasures are compared in Scripture to 'broken cisterns that can hold no water'. God calls Himself 'the Fountain of living waters'. Earthly treasures and joys at the best are perishable: like wells that dry up and leave the thirsty traveller to die. 'Whosoever drinketh of this water,' says the Saviour, 'shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; BUT THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL OF WATER, springing up into everlasting life'.—G. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 25.

## HOME COMING

'I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.'—GENESIS XXIV. 27.

'As for me, the Lord hath led me in the way to.'—R.V.

WHERE did this man want to go? To 'the house of his master's brethren'.

Then he had a *Master!* We all have. No one is his own master. There are two great masters, Jesus and Satan. Can we serve both? No; for they work against one another; the one pulls up what the other plants, and plants what the other pulls up, and no one can serve two masters whose ways are so contrary. Which is your master? If it isn't Jesus, it must be Satan. You are never your own master, never!

What kind of Master is Jesus? He is the good Master. You remember a young man once running to Him and saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' There is another name for good Master. It is *Lord*. Lord is short for 'Good Master'. What do you think the word *Lord* meant at first? It meant the 'giver of bread'—the one who was generous and kind to the poor. Isn't that what Jesus is? He gives bread, does He not? It is called the Bread of Life; that is the soul's food. Which Master will you serve? Satan or Jesus? A master you *must* have; oh, let it be Jesus!

This Master has many brothers. 'I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my Master's brethren.'

A rich little boy was boasting one day to a poor little boy about his great relatives, and said at last, 'My uncle is a lord'. 'So is my Brother,' said the poor boy. 'Your brother a lord!' said the other scornfully; 'pray, what is he called?' 'He is called the Lord Jesus,' was the answer. Yes; Jesus is the Brother of every one who has the same spirit, the same heart, that He has. You can be His brother, or His sister; and oh! is it not grand to think that our elder Brother is the King of earth and heaven?

These brothers of Jesus have a *house*. 'The Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.'

Where is that house? It is the church. Every church is a house of the Master's brethren, and if you are in the Lord's way, you will most surely be led there very often.

Yes, but they do not stay there always. There is another, a greater house and a finer one, into which they are led by and by. It is like this: When people are invited to go to the palace and be presented to the queen, they come up from all parts of the country and from beyond the seas; but they do not go straight to the palace. No; they first take up their abode in some house in the city, and there they wait till the day comes when they are to be presented to the queen, and then they leave the house they stayed in for the time, and go into the palace and see the queen.

It is the same with the Master's brethren—with the Lord's brothers; they wait first in the earthly house of God, and then, when the time comes, one



after another is called to go and see the King, and the King is Jesus! They find, as Joseph's brothers found, that He is their very own Brother who has all the power!

How beautiful His house is! Why, the sky is only the pasture ground outside the garden walls, and there the wind drives the white clouds before him for a flock! The stars are only the golden sands on the shore of the great calm lake that is called Space; and sometimes when there is what we down here call a storm, it acts like an earthquake up above, and makes great cracks in the pasture ground, and then we see the light that is on the other side, great streaks of brightest light, and wise men call it lightning, but even wise men don't know everything! No; they don't know that these are only cracks letting through the light that is beyond! No; they don't know that!

Ah! who can tell how beautiful that house is? If you had a beautiful statue, and could put *life* into it, wouldn't that make it more beautiful still? And if you saw a beautiful face, and could put *love* into it, wouldn't that make it more beautiful yet? Yes; and the grandest house you ever saw or dreamt of, if you could put *Jesus* into it, wouldn't that make it grander still? Well, that is just what makes the house in heaven so beautiful; it is because Jesus Himself is always there. The smallest child in heaven is never lonely, for its Brother is always with it.

How did this man the text speaks of get to the house of his master's brethren? It was *by putting himself in the way*. 'I being in the way.'

That is the great thing, to get into the way. If I want to find out the road that leads to a distant place, I look up the map, and make inquiries as to whether there is a ferry at this river or a bridge at that, and so try to find out all I can about the road. But does that bring me any nearer to the place I want to go to? No; I am just as far from it as ever. There is but one way I ever can get there, and that is by putting myself on the road and going forward.

It is the same with the way to the Master's house on high. The Bible is the map, and it shows us all we need to learn about the way; but we must do something more than study the map, we must go on the way ourselves.

What is the way? It is doing what the Bible tells us; it is loving Jesus, and trusting Jesus, and doing things for His sake. It is trying to look on things as Jesus would look on them, and trying to do things as Jesus would do them. That is getting on the way. The way to Jesus is trying to be like Jesus.

But how did this man *keep* the way? You know, many get on the right road at the first, but afterwards, when they come to cross-roads, and roads that lead out of roads, they often go astray. How did this man keep the right way? Because the *Lord led him*! 'I being in the way, the Lord led me.' Yes;

and when we are on the way to the house of the Master's brethren, the Lord Himself goes with us, and leads us. We may not see Him, but He sees us.

How does He lead us? Oh, in a thousand different fashions! When you do wrong, isn't there something inside you that tells you you have done wrong? That is the Lord trying to lead you right. It is the Lord who whispers in your heart sometimes, saying, 'Don't do that!' or, 'Don't go there, it is wrong!' or, 'Do that!' or, 'Go there, that is right!' He is then leading you.

And so this man got to the house of his Master's brethren, and so will you, by putting yourself in the way—the way of love to Jesus, the way of trusting Him and praying to Him. Do this, and the Lord will lead you step by step, till He brings you to the house of many mansions.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Churchette*, p. 53.

### THE ALL-SEEING EYE

'The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another.'—GENESIS XXXI. 49.

THESE words were said long ago by Jacob, when he and his uncle Laban were going to part from each other, after they had been together for many years.

Jesus says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them'. So however far distant we may be from each other in the body, our souls will be joined together in prayer, and in God's sight will be close together, with Him in the midst listening to our prayers for one another. God is always present with us, wherever we are, 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?'

These words show us how impossible it is for us ever to escape from God, or to do anything that He cannot see and know all about. Just as the air fills every place in the world, and as the sea fills all the deep bed God has made for it, so God fills all heaven and earth, and 'In Him we live and move and have our being'.

You might run away from the home, you might go away from this part of the world to another, you might go all round the world, and you *will* go out of the world, one day; but wherever you go, you must take yourself with you. And as God is everywhere, it is as impossible for you to escape from God as to escape from your own presence.

Let us think about God's all-seeing eye which follows us everywhere, and from which we can never escape.

I remember when I was at school at Lowestoft, there was a large card hanging on the wall of the schoolroom, with all the texts in the Bible which speak of God seeing us written on it, as a warning to us not to do anything we should be ashamed for God to see; and the text in the middle of all was 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good'.



When I was travelling in Belgium once, I saw a figure of Our Lord's head in the Cathedral at Antwerp, which was made in such a way that, whichever direction anyone walked the eyes followed, and one could not escape from them. They seemed to be watching as though they belonged to a living person.

It ought to be a great happiness to you to know that God is always watching you, for He sees every effort you make to please Him, and is none the less pleased because others may not see it; 'The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers'.

God not only sees every effort His children make to please Him, but He is always ready to listen to their prayers, for prayer is the Voice of the Soul speaking to God.

When we are trying to follow in the Saviour's steps, and we tell God how difficult it is, and ask Him to help us, He is always ready to listen to us. He is far more ready to listen to our prayers than, I am afraid, we often are to pray. And when we are a long way from each other, God will see us, and will listen to the prayers we send up to Him for each other.

God has also promised to *guide* us with His eye. He says, 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with Mine eye.' He will be our Good Shepherd, and watch us all through our journey from this world to the next; and when He sees us going astray, He will speak to us through our Conscience, and warn us of our danger, so that we may return to the narrow way which leads to life.

What a good thing it is that God sees us! For He is able to warn us when He sees us straying into the broad way which leads to destruction. As I have told you before, we are only 'strangers and pilgrims' in this world; we are on a journey to heaven, which is our home. God is close to every one of us at all times, and can help people all over the world at the same time. A soldier dying on the battle-field in South Africa can feel that God is with him, and die in peace; while at the same time God is with you here, and will also be watching over me somewhere else. So you see, wherever we go, God is with us, and can see us.

Some years ago a sad accident happened in a coal mine in Wales. An immense quantity of water flooded it. It was after most of the men had left their work; but down in a very deep part of the pit were four men and a boy. It seemed to them that this must be their grave, for although they were not reached by the water, there were many tons of earth and coal shutting them in, away from the light of day and the fresh air. Some of the other men determined to rescue them. They knew it would be many days before they could reach them, and they might starve or suffocate, or they might be drowned by the water coming in. But they all loved God, and they knew God was with them in that pit, so they were not afraid at the thought of dying; and they prayed

and sang hymns, until they were too weak to speak from want of food. But God never forgets His servants when they are in trouble, and He watched over them all the time they were buried in that pit, and He listened to their prayers, 'For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers'; and after they had been buried for nine days, God let their rescuers find them.

How anxious all their friends must have been feeling about them, wondering whether they would ever see them again; but God had been watching over them while they were absent from one another, and at last restored them to each other.

But we must remember that the eyes of the Lord behold the evil as well as the good, and that ought to warn us not to do anything that we should not like God to see. 'The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.'

It is no more possible for us to escape from God than to escape from ourselves. But nevertheless people *have* tried to hide from God.

Adam and Eve tried to hide from God.

He had told them they might eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden of Eden, except the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

But the devil tempted Eve, as he often tempts us, to disobey God. He said to her, 'Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? and the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.'

Instead of trying to resist the devil, Eve listened to him and let him persuade her to disobey God, and then she tempted Adam, and persuaded him to disobey God also; and they felt so ashamed of themselves that they tried to hide from God; but He had been watching their disobedience, and He called them out of their hiding-place, and they had to tell Him all. God punished Adam and Eve very severely for disobeying Him; He drove them out of the beautiful garden, where they might have been so happy if only they had done what God told them.

How impossible it is then for us to escape from God's sight, for His eyes are watching us everywhere, and see both the evil and the good! But sometimes we seem to forget this. Have you children never done what you knew was wrong when your friends were away? Have you never disobeyed them behind their backs? I am afraid we can all remember times when we have done this, but we forgot that God was watching us all the time; and we must ask His

forgiveness, or we shall have to answer for what we have done when we stand before His Judgment Seat.

But why should we want to escape from God's sight? When we have done nothing wrong we do not want to be out of our friends' sight, we like being with them. But if we have disobeyed them we wish we could escape from their sight before they find out our sin.

It is sin that makes us wish we could escape from God's sight, because we feel so ashamed that He should know the wrong that we have done.

Adam and Eve felt ashamed, and longed to hide from God. 'They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden, in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden.' But it was no use, for God had been watching them the whole time.

How careful we must be not to do anything we should be ashamed for God to see, knowing that nothing can be hidden from Him.

I remember a story of a little boy who wanted to take some sweets he had been forbidden to touch; he said it would be all right, because the cupboard where they were kept was dark, so he would not be seen; but his sister reminded him that God could see in the dark. The Bible tells us this; it says, 'The darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee'.

Remember this; and if you ever feel tempted to be disobedient when your friends' backs are turned, think of that text—'Thou God seest me'.

Well, now we have thought of God's eye always seeing us, let us think about our own eyes.

We all hope to see Jesus one day. And we all shall see Him when we stand before Him to be judged.

But shall we be pleased to see Him?

We have never seen Him before, but He has been watching us all our lives, without ever taking His eyes off us; and when He comes to judge us, 'Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him'. And that does not only mean the soldier who pierced the dear Saviour's side with the spear. It means all sinners. Every time we sin we wound Jesus; it was our sins that made Him suffer the cross and the spear.

If we have repented of our sins, and have been forgiven for them, we shall be pleased to see Jesus, and 'with joy and gladness shall we be brought, and shall enter into the King's palace'.

But if we appear before Him without having tried to overcome the sins that caused Him such pain, we shall not be pleased to see Him, and 'shall go away into everlasting punishment'.

The best way for us to be pleased to see Jesus then, is to remember that He sees us now. Try to let your childhood be like His; and we must pray for one another that we may meet in that City, of which we are citizens, and see Jesus face to face for evermore.

And our eyes at last shall see Him,  
Through His own redeeming Love;  
For that child so dear and gentle  
Is Our Lord in Heaven above.  
And He leads His Children on  
To the place where He is gone.

—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 143.

### THE MEETINGS WITH THE ANGELS

'And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.'—GENESIS XXXII. I.

WHATEVER may be thought or said of Jacob, there is no doubt that his is an intensely human character. It is, I think, the first quite human character in the Bible. Cardinal Newman remarked that 'Abraham we feel to be above ourselves, Jacob to be like ourselves'. It is difficult to rise to the majestic conception of him who is called in St. James's Epistle 'the friend of God'. But Jacob's ambition, his temptation, his fall, his punishment, his remorse, his agony of faith, his purification by suffering, these are features of the common human life. Suppose there is some one among us (and there may well be in a new Term) who has in his heart a love of holiness, could he but be true to it, who desires above all else to see the face of God, and yet who is not entirely sure of his own sincerity—not sure that he would have the grace of scorning a mean action, if there were a certainty of his gaining a privilege by it—who feels that he might be led into doing evil that good might come (which is so dangerous a course, because the evil you do is certain, and the good is only contingent and may never come to pass), that he might not rise above the level of public opinion, but fall below it, and possibly even drag it down; well, then, such an one is a Jacob, a supplanter, and it will cost him a sore effort to win his soul's salvation.

I. It is a comfort, then, to think that when 'Jacob went on his way,' as we shall go during the next few weeks on ours, 'the angels of God met him'. You know he had just parted from Laban; he was returning to his old home. He was going to meet the brother he had offended; perhaps there is some one here who, in coming back to Harrow, has rather dreaded meeting a justly offended schoolfellow. It was even then in Jacob's life that the angels met him, and it was the turning-point, I would say, of his life. For Jacob, as I have said, is one of those who begin badly, who do what is wrong, and have to suffer for it, and to suffer greatly; and yet he too had heavenly visions and spiritual strivings, and the end was that he became a prince of God.

It is told in the biography of the great St. Columba, who was the Apostle, as I dare say you know, of Scotland, that one day when he was visiting one of his monasteries, a little boy, 'a poor little scholar of thick speech and heavy look,' came and touched the end of his robe, just as the poor woman in the Gospel touched our Lord's. The people who saw him cried, 'Back, back, little fool'. But St. Columba turned and kissed him—he was

trembling all over—then he made the sign of the cross upon his tongue. ‘This boy,’ he said, ‘whom you have so despised, let no man despise him from this day forth. For he shall be great, and shall grow in wisdom and in virtue; he shall be famous in all the Churches of Scotland, and God shall give his tongue the gift of truth and eloquence.’ And long afterwards that little boy would tell this story, and when he died he too was honoured as a saint.

II. But the truth is, that to us all come heavenly visions, if only we knew them and would live as in the light of them. God has not left us to fight out our own battles. We are compassed about with a cloud of heavenly witnesses. ‘We are made a spectacle’—a theatre—‘unto the world, and to angels, and to men.’ Oh! if we could draw aside the veil which ever hides the invisible world from human eyes, if we could look upon life, as some day we shall look upon it from the verge of the eternal realm, would not the mountain, as in the vision of Elisha, seem to be full of horses and chariots around God’s saints? should we not realize with a horror of surprise the spiritual powers which agonize for every living human soul? Think what a mystery lies in the promise that there is joy among the angels over one sinner who repents of his life’s sin. Think what solemnity rests on your dealing with even the humblest of your schoolfellows in this place, if his angel does always behold the face of your Father and his Who is in heaven.

III. Let me speak, first, of your private devotions. People sometimes talk as if prayer were a waste of time. They say, ‘The world is full of suffering, it needs action; let us emerge from our retirement and set it to rights’. Ah! they do not know at all that prayer is action, even as action, in the old saying, is a form of prayer. They think of Christ only as the Healer and Redeemer; they do not discern the secret of His saving works in the long nights spent in prayer upon the mountain. But you—you will not make this great mistake. It were hardly too much to say that there is one point only in which God’s saints of all the ages and of all religions are agreed, and that is the spiritual potency of prayer. Would you know the revelation of the Divine will? Then ‘enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret’.

2. Nor is it only so, methinks, that angels meet you. Can it be that they are present when you worship alone, and are not present when you worship in the sanctuary? Nay, One greater than the angels has declared that, where two or three are gathered together in His Name, He Himself is in the midst of them, to bless them.

3. But yet once more, and in the highest sense, the angels meet you when you gather round the Table of the Lord. For that is the highest function, you know, of Christian worship, and it is only the fully enfranchised Christians who are admitted to it.—J. E. C. WELDON, *Sermons Preached to Harrow Boys*, 1885-6, p. 89.

## DREAMING AND DOING

‘Joseph dreamed a dream.’—GENESIS XXXVII. 5.

I do not believe much in the future life of a boy who never dreams. I do not mean by a dream only the curious odd fancies which sometimes come into the mind at night, but I mean the dreams which visit us while our eyes are wide open in the daytime; and often the dreams of our sleep are closely connected with the dreams of our waking hours.

You remember that the things Joseph dreamt about were sheaves and stars. I suppose the fact is that often in the daytime, as he walked through the splendid fields of corn, like wide seas of golden glory rippling in the bright eastern sunshine, and saw all scattered over them, almost like beds of variegated flowers, the groups of people in their bright-coloured garments reaping the crops and binding them into sheaves, great thoughts used to come into his mind that, good and useful as the work of these people was, there must be some nobler and better thing in life, and that he would like to attain to it. And then at night, as he looked up at the great heaven with its myriad stars, which seem to grow more and more as we gaze on at the darkening sky, he felt some of those great and higher thoughts which come into all our minds when we look up from earth to the glory and the splendour and the majesty of the hosts of heaven. And so he went to bed and dreamt sleeping, as he had dreamt waking, of great things.

If you never *dream*, waking or sleeping, while you are young, of great things, you will never *do* great things when you have grown up. But dreaming is not enough. There were two mistakes which Joseph seems to have made at this time.

He thought that greatness consisted in having other people serving him.

He thought that he could easily and without any trouble become great.

He was to *become* great as we now know; not easily, but through long years of trial and toil.

And he was to *be* great, not by having others serving him, but by serving them, and saving, by his genius and skill and energy, millions of lives of men.

We learn that lesson from Joseph’s life. His father’s cruel kindness had led him to imagine that he might become great by some kind of easy favouritism. But God taught him otherwise. You will remember another life which we read of in the Bible—not that of the younger, but that of the ‘first-born among many brethren’—which shows us that the grandest, greatest, noblest thing on earth is to labour and to live for others, and even, if need be, to die for them.

Dreaming will not do us good without doing. But the doing is scarcely likely to come if we have not dreamed about it first. Boys—have an ideal while you are young—dwell on it, think of it; that is what we mean by dreaming. Don’t begin life by saying in your hearts, ‘I can do nothing great, I can never become famous’. If that is your dream of life, be



sure it will easily come true. But say to yourself, 'Others have grown up from being boys like myself to do noble deeds for others, to serve their King and country, and to help in saving those for whom Christ died. Why should not I do the same? I will not only dream of it, but work hard from the beginning. I will pray God to show me where the path of duty for me lies, and even if it seems to lead me, as it led Joseph, into the slavery and struggle of some Egypt, I will trust God, and trusting Him do the right.'

There was a young lad one day lying on a grassy bank in Worcestershire. He was dreaming. His eyes were fixed on a grand old house and a glorious park which lay on the other side of the little stream of water which flowed at his feet. The name of the fine old place was Daylesford. It had belonged to his family long years before: he came of an old race descended from one of the Danish sea-kings who once were England's terror. They had owned it for centuries, but lost it in years of misfortune. And the dream he dreamt, with his eyes wide open, and his heart beating full of courage and resolve, was this: that though he was poor, and with no great friends to help him now, he would fight a brave battle in life, and perhaps some day be able to buy back the dear old place. The only opening he could find, however, in life was to go as a humble clerk to India. This was a hundred and fifty years ago, and India then was little known in England; it took many months to sail there, and some people doubted whether the small band of merchants, who were its real governors, would be able to hold it. So the young lad's prospects of Daylesford did not seem very bright. I cannot now tell you the whole of that young lad's history. You can read it when you grow older, or some of you even now, in the pages of Lord Macaulay's Essays; and you can go any day to Westminster Abbey and read there on a monument how it ended. He rose step by step, and the day came when Warren Hastings—for that was the little lad's name—was not only Governor-General of India, but also the owner of Daylesford, and to Daylesford, after a long and great career, he came at last to die. He told the story of his early dreams some time after, when they had all come true.

Thought first, and then Action; the Dreaming first, and then the Doing.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *St. George for England*, p. 21.

### JOSEPH, THE MODEL REALISER OF GOD'S PRESENCE

'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?'—GENESIS XXXIX. 9.

It is easy to speak of *four* ways in which his sense of God's presence proved a blessing to Joseph. And if we learn to follow the model he thus sets before us, it will be a blessing to us in the same way.

**I. When Joseph realised God's Presence, he found in it—'Company in his Loneliness'.**—We can easily think of different occasions in Joseph's life when he must have felt very lonely. There was one,

for instance, when he came to his brethren to inquire how they were, as they were feeding their flocks in Dothan. They saw him coming, and made up their minds to kill him. When he came up to them they seized him roughly, and stripped him of the coat of many colours, which his father had given him. Reuben persuaded them not to kill him. But they cast him into a deep pit, and left him there by himself all night. How lonely he must have felt then!

And after this, when he was sold as a slave into Egypt, and found himself a stranger in that strange land, with not a single person in the whole country that he knew, and not one that knew him, how lonely he must have felt!

And then, when on account of the false accusation of his master's wife, he was suddenly cast into prison, how lonely he must have felt! But we are told that 'the Lord was with Joseph' in the prison. And the sense he had of God's presence took away the feeling of loneliness, and made him happy and contented, even when he was shut up in that lonely cell.

And this sense of God's presence which he had must have given him a feeling of companionship in all his times of loneliness.

And there are times with us all, when we have to be separated from our friends, and be left alone. But, if we learn to realise God's presence as Joseph did, this will make us feel that we have pleasant company in our most lonely home.

One of the best and holiest men that ever lived was Henry Martyn, the English missionary to Persia. In carrying on his work there, he had many long and lonely journeys to take. But how sweetly he realised God's presence, as giving him company in his loneliness, is seen in these beautiful lines, which were found, after his death, written on one of the blank leaves of the Bible that he carried with him wherever he went:—

In desert woods, with Thee, My God,  
Where human footsteps never trod,  
How happy could I be!  
Thou, my repose from care, my light  
Amid the darkness of the night—  
*In solitude my company.*

And how many of God's dear children have realised His presence in just the same way! Here is an illustration of this.

*The companionship of Jesus.*—This incident was told by one of our chaplains in the late war.

'I went into a tent connected with the general hospital one day,' says he. 'There, on one of the beds, lay a beautiful drummer-boy, about sixteen years of age, burning up with fever.

"Where is your home, my young friend?" I asked.

"In Massachusetts, sir," was his reply.

"And you do not feel very lonely here, so far away from your father and mother, and all your friends, and so sick as you are?"

"I never can forget," says the chaplain, 'the sweet smile that lighted up his deep blue eyes, and played over his fevered lips, as he said, in answer to my ques-



tion, "Oh, no, sir. How can I feel lonely when Jesus is with me?"

That dear boy was realizing God's presence in just the way of which we are speaking; and he found company in it.

**II. As he realised God's Presence, Joseph found—'Comfort in Trouble'.**—And we shall find the same, just so far as we follow the model he has left us. Few persons have had such great troubles to bear as Joseph had. And yet he bore them bravely and cheerfully. And the secret of it was, he felt that God was present with him, all the time, and he found comfort in this thought. This gave Joseph comfort, when nothing else could have done so. And if we follow the model which he left us, and learn to realize God's presence, as he did, we shall find comfort under all our troubles, in the feeling that He is with us. Let us look at some examples of the way in which this comfort was found.

*The nearness of God.*—A city missionary in London used often to visit a poor old widow. She lived in a garret alone by herself. All she had to live on was half-a-crown a week, allowed her from some charity. This was only a little over half a dollar of our money, and was barely enough to keep her alive.

The missionary used to notice, standing on her window-sill, an old broken tea-pot, in which a strawberry plant was growing. He felt interested in watching it, and seeing how it grew. One day he said to the old woman, 'I am glad to see how nicely your plant is growing. You'll soon have some berries ripening on it.' 'I don't care about the fruit,' she said, 'It's not *that* which leads me to watch over this little plant. But I am too poor to keep any living creature with me. And I love to have this little plant in my room. I know it can only live and grow by the power of God. And as I look at it, from day to day, and see it growing, it makes me feel that God is here with me, and I find great comfort in that thought.'

*Don't worry.*—During the reign of Oliver Cromwell in England, an English ambassador was going to Sweden; to represent his country there. He was a good Christian man; but things were in such a troubled state in England, that he was sorry to be obliged to leave, and was greatly disturbed on this account.

The last night he spent in England before sailing for Sweden, he was so distressed that it was impossible for him to sleep. He had a faithful man-servant, who was an earnest, intelligent Christian. He was grieved to see his master so much distressed. He heard him tossing about on his bed, and sighing and groaning. At last he rose, and went into his master's chamber, and apologising for disturbing him at such an hour, he begged to be allowed to ask him two or three questions. Permission was granted. Then he said: 'Pray, sir, don't you think that God governed the world very well before you came into it?'

'I do.'

'And pray, sir, don't you think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?'

'Certainly I do.'

'Pardon me, sir, but don't you think you might safely leave Him to govern it while you are in it, without being so much troubled?'

This was a view of the matter he had never taken. But he saw it was the right view to take.

He thanked his faithful servant for the suggestion he had made. He resolved to put away the thought which had been troubling him. Then he turned over, and went quietly to sleep. He realised God's presence, and this gave him comfort in his trouble.

**III. Joseph found—'Strength for Duty'—in realising God's Presence.**—And if we follow the model he has set us we shall find the same.

When his father told him to take that long journey, from Beersheba, where he lived, to Shechem, where his other sons were feeding their flocks, that he might see his brethren, and inquire how they were, Joseph obeyed his father, without a moment's hesitation. He knew very well that his brethren did not love him. They hated him because of his dreams; and because their father had unwisely let it be seen that he loved Joseph more than he did any of his other sons. Joseph had reason therefore to fear that his brethren would not be kind to him. But, of course, he could have had no idea of the cruel way in which they were going to treat him. Still he obeyed his father at once. He felt sure that God would be with him, and this thought gave him strength to do his duty.

The same feeling gave him strength to do his duty in the house of Potiphar; and very soon he rose to the highest place in that household.

And when he was cast into prison, he did his duty there so faithfully, that the keeper of the prison soon had so much confidence in him that he left the whole management of it in his hands. And it was the constant feeling of God's presence which Joseph had, that gave him strength to do his duty in all those trying circumstances. And if we follow the model Joseph has left us, of realising God's presence, it will have just the same effect on us. It will always give us strength for duty, whatever that duty may be.

Let us look at an illustration of this point. We may begin with a story about—

*A brave sailor boy.*—He was a cabin boy on board an English man-of-war. He had a pious mother, and was trying to be a Christian; and the story shows how the sense he had of God's presence strengthened him for duty, under very trying circumstances, and made him eminently useful to his ship-mates and to his country. The sailors called this boy 'Cloudy'. The incident to which I refer took place in the midst of a terrible naval battle between the English and the Dutch. The flagship of the English fleet was commanded by the brave Admiral Narborough. His vessel had got separated somehow from the rest of his fleet, and was drawn into the

thickest of the fight. Two of its masts had just been shot away, and had fallen with a fearful crash upon the deck. The Admiral saw that all would soon be lost unless he could bring up the rest of his ships to help him. He summoned a lot of his men upon the quarter deck.

He could not send a boat, but he asked if any of them would volunteer to swim through the fight, and take an order for the rest of the fleet to come up at once to his help. A dozen men offered to go; and little Cloudy made the same offer. The Admiral smiled, when he looked at him, and said, 'Why Cloudy, what can you do?'

'I can swim, sir, as well as any of them. You can't spare these men from the guns, sir. It won't make much matter if I am killed. But I'm sure that God will take care of me. Please, sir, let me go.'

'Go, my brave lad,' said the Admiral, 'and may God bless you!'

He thanked the Admiral, and running to the side of the ship, sprang over into the sea, and struck out bravely towards the ships, which he was to order up. The men cheered him, and then went back to their guns.

The fight went on, but the Dutch were getting the best of it. The Admiral was feeling very sadly. He did not see how he could hold out much longer. He said to himself, 'I have never hauled down the flag of old England yet. I'd rather die than do it now. But how can I help it?'

Just then he heard a firing to the right. Looking through the clouds of smoke that surrounded him, he saw that the brave boy had got through his long and dangerous swim. He had delivered the order entrusted to him; and the expected ships were coming, crowding down upon the enemy. This turned the tide of battle. The Dutch were soon beaten, and the flag of old England was not hauled down that day.

In the evening the Admiral called his men on deck to thank them for their brave conduct. And then, turning to Cloudy, who was also present, he said:—

'And I want especially to thank you, my brave lad, for your noble conduct. *We owe this victory to you.* I hope to live to see you have a flagship of your own, some day.'

And it turned out just so. That cabin boy went on realising God's presence; and this gave him strength for duty, till he was knighted by the king, and known in the English navy as—Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovel.

IV. When Joseph realised the Presence of God, he found that it gave him—'Victory over Temptation'.—And if we follow the model he has left us, we shall find that it will do the same for us.

The wife of his master, Potiphar, was trying to persuade Joseph to do what would have been very wrong. But the thing that kept him from doing it was the feeling he had that God was looking at him all the time. This led him to say, in the words of

our text, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' It gave him victory over temptation.

But we all have temptations to meet with wherever we go. And the very best way of meeting these temptations is to imitate the model Joseph has left us, by trying, as he did, to realise God's presence, and never to forget that His eye is always upon us.

*The thought of God's eye.*—Emma Gray was a Sunday-school girl who was trying to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make herself useful. As she was going to school one day, during the week, she passed a little boy, whose hand was thrust through the railings of a gentleman's front garden trying to steal some flowers.

'Oh, my little boy,' said Emma kindly, 'do you think it's right to take those flowers without asking leave?'

'I only want two or three,' said the boy, 'and nobody sees me.'

'You are mistaken there, my boy. God is looking at you from yonder blue sky. He says we must not take what does not belong to us without leave. And if you do it He will see it, and it will grieve Him.'

'Then, if He's looking at me I won't do it,' said the little fellow. And so, as he thought of God's eye, or realised God's presence, it gave him the victory over the temptation to steal those flowers.

Joseph stands before us as the model realiser of God's presence. It was a blessing to him in four ways.

It gave him *company in his loneliness*; *comfort in trouble*; *strength for duty*; and *victory over temptation*. And if we learn to realise that presence as he did, it will be a blessing to us, in just the same way. Remember these four words whenever you think of Joseph: *company—comfort—strength—and victory.*—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 91.

## THE INTERPRETER

'Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God?'—GENESIS XL. 8.

SOMETIMES we see a picture—very pretty—bright colours—pleasant faces—only we cannot tell *what it means*. Presently some one comes and *explains it*—tells the story in words which we can understand—*interprets it* for us. Notice:—

1. *Two Pictures which Needed an Interpreter.*—Two men in prison—dreary days—what a relief the nights must have brought them! Prison walls can't shut out the sights which come to men in sleep.

1. *The picture which the butler saw.*—Beautiful vine. Three branches. Budded, blossomed, brought forth clusters. A man, himself, the king's cup in his hand; seizes a bunch of the ripe grapes, squeezes juice into cup, and gives the cup into the king's hand.

2. *The picture which the baker saw.*—A man, himself; three baskets of fine bread on his head. In

the top basket all manner of confectionery. Birds of the air hovering round and picking out the choicest morsels.

**II. The Interpreter and his Interpretations.**—If we want to know what a picture means, the best person to tell us is the man who painted it. Who had painted these dream pictures?

*Illustration.*—Sometimes see a plate on which child has been rubbing paints; a quantity of colour-smudges—blue—red—green—yellow—all mixed up together! Many dreams something like this, just a quantity of thought-smudges. The butler thinks about grapes and cups; the baker about bread and confectionery; no wonder that in their dreams they should see pictures which remind them of such things. Once a great artist, Turner, got his grandchildren to rub their fingers about in the colours on his palette. When they had made a great mess he said, 'Now stop,' and then from their smudges he painted a most beautiful picture. God sometimes does this with our thought-smudges. So, here, with the butler and the baker, He took their confused thoughts and made clear pictures out of them.]

In the prison was a man who trusted God, and because he trusted God, therefore God trusted him. He understood what the dream pictures meant, God taught him to interpret them. This was his explanation: The three branches and the three baskets each meant three days. The butler squeezing grapes into the king's cup would get his place back again in that time. The baker, whose confectionery was stolen by the birds, would lose his head as he had lost his wares. So, too, it came about, and the interpretation was found to be true.

*Conclusion.*—Some people like to have dreams, but dreams are not much good if they have no meaning or if we can't find out what the meaning is. God sometimes teaches men by dreams, but He has many other ways of teaching them. The world itself is God's great picture-book, full of meaning for those who can interpret it. Better to be an interpreter than a dreamer. Cf. Job xxxiii. 23. If we can interpret, not dreams only but all nature will bring us messages from God. Can we be interpreters? Yes, if we are like Joseph, pure, simple, trusting God, trying to obey Him. Those who trust God, God trusts. If like Joseph, we shall find, all about us, pictures with a meaning to them. Everything about us has a meaning if only we could understand. The seeds growing say to the interpreter, 'Don't be in a hurry; first the grain, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear'. The wind says, 'Ye know not whence I come or whither I go, and God's Spirit is like me'. The moon says, 'I am so bright and beautiful, because I reflect the light of the sun; if you want to be bright and beautiful you must reflect the glory of Christ'. We need not mind dreams, good or bad: let us learn to trust and obey God, so that He may teach us to be good interpreters.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 135.

## PAYING OFF OLD SCORES

'Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.'—GENESIS XLV. 15.

THERE is an old proverb that says, 'Revenge is very sweet'. Well, revenge is sweet, and one very often hears a boy say about another boy, 'I'll pay him out'. Well, it is right to pay him out. It is a sweet thing to be able to pay one out who has done you an ill turn. Revenge is very sweet, *but* you must go about it in the right way. There are two ways of doing everything—a right and a wrong way; and so there is a right and a wrong way of revenge, a right and a wrong way of paying another out. The wrong way of doing this is a way that is not sweet, or good, or wise; but there is another way that is very sweet, and good, and wise, and that is what we have in the text.

**I. Joseph's Revenge.**—His brothers had done him a very ill turn. You remember how they took away his pretty coat which his father had given him, and put him into a pit which had no water in it, and then sold him as a slave to a lot of travelling merchants, who carried him down to Egypt, where he got into no end of trouble. But God was with him, and he got on wonderfully, and at length became prime minister to Pharaoh—the second man in all the land of Egypt! And now he had got these brothers into one room; he had got them into the palm of his hand as it were; he had only got to close his fingers upon them to crush them. He had just to strike his hands together twice, and instantly there would have come in a lot of servants with swords; and he had only just to give a nod, and all those brothers of his would have been killed there and then. But that would have been both a foolish and a wicked way of taking his revenge. Joseph wasn't going to pay them out in *that* way.

Still, he was resolved to pay them out, and he did. How did he do it? Why, just as we read in the text, 'he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, and forgave them'. He did them good; he made use of his power to serve them, to keep them alive. Instead of calling in his servants to kill them, he just flung both arms round their necks, and had a good cry; and they all kissed just as they kissed one another when little boys together. That was Joseph's way of paying them out; and you see what a wise and beautiful and noble bit of revenge it was. It broke their hearts, I should think. It made them very sorry, and by and by it filled them with the very wine of joy and gladness, and the gladness went right away to the poor old father living alone, in sorrow and sickness, ever mourning for his dead boy, Joseph. Why, it made the old man's heart dance with gladness!

Joseph's revenge, I think, must have been the happiest hour of his life, and he had had some *very* happy hours before. That must have been a very happy morning when his father brought out from his stores that coat of many colours—the boy must have been very happy when he first went out in that



beautiful coat ; and then that morning when he awoke from the dream God gave him, showing how all his brothers should bow down before him ; and again when he was rescued from prison and made prime minister to King Pharaoh ; but I don't think he ever had *such* a happy moment as when he was paying his brothers out—that moment when he was able to pay them back good measure, weighed down and running over, good for evil, a kiss for a blow, the tears of love for all the bad things they had done. That is the way to pay out.

**II. That is How Jesus Pays Out.**—If you read the story of Jesus' revenge, you will find it was just like Joseph's, only better, larger, and nobler. Still Jesus had His revenge, He paid out people who did Him an ill turn. They hated Him, grieved Him, forsook Him, and killed Him on the cross, did everything they could to injure Him, and Jesus paid them out. On the morning of the third day He rose from the grave, and that morning He was the Master of everything in this world. God put into His hands all authority and power ; He was stronger than death and hell, stronger than all the world ; and just as Joseph had his brethren, so on the morning of our Lord's Resurrection He had His enemies in the palm of His hand, He had only to close His fingers to crush them. But He did very much better than that. You read in history of people who rebel against governments, and when the rebellion is put down they are not *all* forgiven ; no, the ringleaders are not forgiven, they are killed ; only the smaller offenders are forgiven.

But Jesus Christ didn't act like that, He didn't say So-and-so and So-and-so must not be forgiven, only the others. No ; He said to His disciples, ' All power is given Me in heaven and earth ; go ye therefore into *all the world* and preach the Gospel '—that is, *forgiveness* to everybody.

That was Jesus' way of paying them out, and I think *Jesus* never had such a happy moment as when He said those words ; and He had had some *very* happy moments too. *That* was a happy moment when He felt God's spirit coming down upon Him when He was baptised, and when He did His first miracle, and when He bent over the little girl, the daughter of Jairus, and called her up from death. How happy He must have been, how His heart must have sung within Him, as He saw the girl's face brighten into life ! But I don't think He *ever* had such a happy moment as when He paid the world out, and told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel of love to *all*. ' If you meet the man who put his lance through My side, preach forgiveness to him. If you meet the man who struck the nails through My hands, preach the Gospel of love to *him*.' That was Jesus Christ's way of paying out.

**III. Your Revenge.**—Now, I dare say you little children, as you grow up, will meet with people who will do you ill turns. You meet them now—boys and girls who annoy you. Well now, mind, always to take your revenge—*always*. Mind don't let a

single thing be done to you without your paying it back ; but do it in *this* way. Don't return a blow for a blow—that is stupid ; don't return a frown for a frown—that is foolish. That is not paying out at all ; you do no good to anybody, and get no joy yourself. Joy is to be found only in following Joseph's plan, and following the plan of Jesus Christ—paying out evil with good, frowns with smiles, and blows with affection—and so will you draw down blessings on yourselves, and so will you have the very joy that makes God glad. May God help you in this.—*J. MORGAN GIBBON, In the Days of Youth, p. 1.*

#### THE REDEEMING ANGEL

'The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.'  
—GENESIS XLVIII. 16.

This is what a dear, kind old grandfather said to his grandsons. I have tried to find out how old his grandsons were. As far as I can make out they were sixteen and fifteen years of age. These are very important ages. Do you not find that grown-up people always tell you that every age is a very important age ? Whenever you come to a new year, don't people tell you, ' Now you have come to a very important year ? ' So it is.

And I will tell you which I think is the most important age. Which do you think is the most important age ? I think the most important age of life is from one to twelve ; and after that from twelve to twenty-four is the next most important age ; and after that the age is not so important. Do you know why ? Because then the character is formed. Most people's characters are formed between the years of one and twelve ! and some people's between twelve and twenty-four—very few people's after that.

I am sure, then, that fifteen and sixteen are very important ages. And this dear old grandfather spoke to these boys when they were fifteen and sixteen years old, and he told them how kind God had been to him all his long life. I think we ought to do that—don't you ? That is one thing I ought to do as your clergyman. I am much older than you, and I ought to be able to say how kind God has been to me ; how good I have found God. And so I can. But not clergymen only. I think everybody ought to say so.

Don't you sometimes wonder that grown-up people don't talk to you more sensibly and usefully about religion ? Does it ever strike you that when grown-up men and women talk to you, they do not talk to you about anything that will do you any real good ? I wish they did. I used to think it was a strange thing when I was a boy. And so will you remember, when you grow up, that you used to think that grown-up people never told you anything that would do you any real good.

Jacob did talk to Ephraim and Manasseh about good things, to do them good, did not he ? He told them how God had taken care of him all his life ; how God had ' redeemed him from all evil '.



Do you remember how God 'redeemed' Jacob 'from all evil'? Let us try to recollect.

When Jacob was young he was not very good; he was not kind to his brother Esau; he took advantage of him; and, I must say, he cheated him; and he deceived his own father, and God might have punished him very much for it. God did punish him a little. He might have punished him very much; but he did not do that. And when he was obliged to go away from home, when his mother sent him away from his brother because he had been naughty, and he had to go away to a far country, that night God met him, and told him He forgave him, that He 'redeemed him from all evil'.

Then Jacob had to go out, a long way off, and spend twenty-one years as a slave at Paden-arain. And although he had to live with a very treacherous master God took care of him, and did not let his master hurt him. He delivered him 'from all evil'. He made him rich, He took care of him all these years, and when he came back, Jacob thought his brother Esau would kill him, for he was very strong and powerful, but God 'redeemed him from all evil'; and 'Esau ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him'.

But God sent a great famine after that, and Jacob was likely to have died of hunger, but God took care of him; there was plenty of corn in Egypt, and 'redeemed him from all evil'. Jacob thought Benjamin would die, but God 'redeemed him from all evil', Benjamin didn't die. And He let him see Joseph again. So God was very kind to him all his life. He 'redeemed him from all evil'. And when Jacob was very old, he told his grandsons how kind God had been to him, how he had taken care of him all his life, and said, 'The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads'.

I. I wonder if you know who the 'Angel' is? Who do you think is 'the Angel' that redeemed him from all evil? Do you know what the word 'angel' means? It means a messenger, a good messenger. And the angels in heaven are so called because they carry messages. It is a nice thing to carry messages, if we carry them well. If we carry kind messages, and do it in an accurate way, like Christ, it is being like the angels in heaven, it is being like Jesus Christ. I hope you will be all good messengers. Perhaps you will have a very important message to carry, and you ought to do it well. I have a very important one to carry to-day. Therefore I am an angel, for ministers are angels.

But it is not an angel from heaven, it is not a minister, it is not a common man, that is meant here. Jesus Christ is meant, Jesus Christ is the 'Angel'. Shall we look at one or two verses to show you that? I like to prove things by the Bible.

Will you look at Genesis xxxi. 11; it says, 'And the Angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob'. In the 13th verse the Angel said, 'I am the God of Bethel'. Therefore the Angel was God, therefore the Angel was Christ.

Will you look at the verse before my-text—the

15th verse, Jacob 'blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel'. So the Angel is the same as he first calls God.

Now will you turn to the book of Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament; look at the third chapter—you won't find the word 'Angel' there, but the word 'messenger,' and you know messenger is exactly the same word. This is a prophecy of Christ, shall we read it? The 1st verse of the third chapter, 'Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the *Messenger* of the covenant (i.e. Christ) whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts'.

Now if you like to look at one more passage (Is. Lxiii. 9)—it is all about Christ—'In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them'.

There are a great many more passages, but that will be enough, I think, to show that 'the Angel' in this verse was Jesus Christ.

Now will you look at the verse again, and remember it is Jesus Christ—'The Angel (i.e. Jesus Christ) which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads'. I think now you will understand the word 'Angel'.

II. I want to help you now to understand another word. What is it to be 'redeemed'? Which *redeemed* me from all evil? Can you think? Does 'redeemed' mean 'saved me,' 'delivered me'? Is it the same as if it said, 'The Angel that *delivered* me from all evil'? Not quite. That would only be half the meaning. If I were to save you from being drowned, and it was no trouble to me to save you, and if I did not expose my own life, I should not 'redeem' you; but if I did it at great danger, at great pain, or at great loss to myself, then it might be called 'redeeming'. To 'redeem' is to save at great cost to one's self—because the word means 'buy'—to buy back. Therefore if I spend a great deal of money, and become much poorer by it, in order to do you good, then I 'redeem' you. That is the meaning of the word 'redeemed'.

Did you ever think what was the value of your souls—how much? When I see something very valuable, I sometimes say, 'How much did it cost? How much did that watch cost? How much did that diamond cost?' How much did your soul cost? How much did your body cost? How much did it cost that you should be alive this day? How much did it cost for your 'hope' to go to heaven? How much did it cost that you should have your happy thoughts? How much did it cost? A thousand pounds? Thousands of thousands of pounds? The earth? The world? All the stars? Everything that was ever made? Much more! much more! It cost Jesus Christ—who made everything—the life of Jesus Christ.

Oh! what a precious thing your soul is, and your body too! Your soul was bought, and your body was bought also! Will you remember that that

little body of yours has cost so much? Take care what you do with it; it is very costly. That tongue of yours—do you remember what it cost? Those hands—what they cost? And every thought? And your soul—what it cost?

You mustn't play carelessly with very expensive things, must you? If a watch cost a thousand pounds, you must take care what you do with that watch. Take care what you do with that body, and that soul—for they cost a great deal. Christ 'redeemed' them from 'all evil'—paid His 'blood' for them.

And now we go on to think what it means here—that Christ 'redeems' us 'from all evil'. What is the greatest 'evil' in the world? What is the worst thing? Do you think it would be to break your neck? The worst thing is sin—*sin*. But Christ has 'redeemed' us—'the Angel' has 'redeemed' us from *sin*. Do you remember any text about Christ redeeming us from 'sin'? 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!'

III. And how has He 'redeemed' us 'from sin'? I will tell you what a poor heathen once said about it—perhaps you have read it. A poor heathen, who had become a Christian, wanted to explain how he became a Christian to another heathen who did not know anything about it; and he took a little worm—a poor, little, miserable worm—and he put the worm on a stone, and he put all round the stone, where the worm was, some straw. He then lighted the straw, and when it was all blazing, he ran through the lighted straw, and took up the little worm in his hand when it was wriggling in the fire. The hot fire had scorched and drawn it up. 'This,' he said, 'is just what I was—a poor, miserable worm, with a fire all around me; and I should have died, and gone to hell; but Christ ran in, took me up in His arms, and saved me: and here I am a saved one.'

I will tell you a remarkable thing which happened in a town in the West of England. One Sunday a clergyman was to preach a sermon; the people in the town did not know him; he was a stranger there; but he was known to be a very excellent clergyman, and a very clever man. A great many people went to hear him preach, and when the prayers were over the clergyman went into the pulpit. The congregation noticed that he seemed to feel something very much—for he was silent some time, and could not begin his sermon. He hid his face in his hands, and the congregation thought he was unwell; but he was not.

However, before he gave out his text, he told them something like this: 'I want to say something. Fifteen years ago I was in this town, and I was in this church. I was then very young—and I came to hear the sermon. That evening, three young men came to this church. They were very wicked young men. You may suppose how wicked, for they came not only to laugh, but they came actually to throw stones at the clergyman. They filled their pockets with stones, and determined they would throw at him. When the sermon began they were sitting together, and when the

clergyman had gone on a little way, one said to the other, "Now throw! now throw!" This is what they said, "Now throw at the stupid old blockhead, now throw!" The second said, "No; wait a little, I want to hear the end of what he is saying now, to see what he makes of it". They waited. But presently he said, "Now you can throw: I heard the end of it, there was nothing in it". The third said, "No, no, don't throw, what he says is very good, don't hurt the good old man". Then the two others left the church saying something very wicked; they swore at him, and went away very angry, because he had spoiled their fun in not letting them throw.'

The clergyman went on to say, 'The first of those three young men was hanged some years ago for forgery; the second was a poor, miserable man, brought to poverty and rags, miserable in mind, and miserable in body; and the third is now going to preach to you—Listen!' So 'the Angel' 'redeemed' that poor boy (for he was only a boy when he went to throw stones) 'from all evil'.

It is not only sin, there are other 'evils'. There are a great many troubles in life, aren't there? Have not you a great many troubles? I am sure you have some. It is a great mistake to say to children, 'Oh! you have no troubles'. I think children have quite as many as grown-up people, perhaps more. But people often say to children, 'You have no troubles now, you have them all to come by and by'. That is not the case. I believe you have quite as many troubles as we have; but Christ 'redeems' you from all trouble.

Now there are two ways Christ can do it. Perhaps Christ will say, 'Trouble shan't come to that boy or girl'. That's one way; but He could do it another way. He could say, 'Yes, trouble shall come, but when it comes, it shall be turned into joy. I will make him so happy in his trouble, that he shall be glad. His sorrow shall be turned into joy.'

Which, think you, will be the best, for trouble not to come at all, or, when it comes, to be 'turned into joy'?

It is just so, you know, with the dark cloud which makes the rainbow, or, as a very clever Frenchman has done, it is quite true, he has found out the way to make sugar out of tears. He gets a great number of tears and makes sugar out of them. God makes sugar out of tears, that is the best way of 'redeeming us from evil'. So that you see God can do two things to you, and He will be sure to do one of the two. If you are His child, He will either prevent trouble coming, or, when it comes, He will 'turn it into joy'.

I will tell you about a little boy—it is quite true. About eighty-five years ago there was a little boy, and his name was James. He was six years old. He was the son of Moravian parents, and his father was a missionary; he went out for the missions, and his mother went with his father out to a foreign country. They were very sorry to leave their little boy behind, they were very unhappy to part from him, they

could not help it, but they never saw him again, for they died in the place to which they went out.

James was sent to school, if you want to know the place it was called Fulneck, in Yorkshire. He was a very nice-looking boy, very good, and not much like other boys, as he did not delight in play, but used to like to be by himself, and used to think a great deal. He was very fond of reading, and always read good books; he was a very thoughtful boy.

When he was fourteen he left Fulneck, and went to be apprenticed in a town in Yorkshire. He himself was a Scotch boy. He went to a grocer—he did not like him at all. Mr. Dykes was always complaining of James—he was not the sort of boy for a grocer; he was too fond of reading and books to serve the customers carefully. The grocer said, 'There was old Mrs. Shepstone came yesterday to buy some snuff, and he sold her coffee instead. And on another day he told a person the price of tea was 4d. a lb. instead of 4s.' Mr. Dykes was very unkind, he used to give him hard words and hard blows. At last he told James that he could not keep him any longer, he must go away, and earn what he could.

The poor boy had only three shillings and sixpence in his pocket when he was turned away; and his master told him he had better go to London, or somewhere else. When he left, he said—not meaning it, but rather in a joke—'Perhaps, Mr. Dykes, I shall be a greater man than you some day; and perhaps people will come to see the house where I was born,' for he had great ambition.

He didn't go to London, for another person in the town gave him a situation. He did not, however, stay long there, he went from one situation to another. But although he was so fond of books, and fond of the best thoughts, yet he prayed a great deal, and grew up a thoughtful, pious young man.

Now I am going to skip over about eighty years, and I will tell you what happened then. At the little town of Alva, in Scotland, there arrived a nice old gentleman—an honourable old man—and all the town came to meet him. The magistrate came to meet him in his robes; and after speaking a word or two, the good old gentleman said, 'I want to ask you a kindness; will you allow me to go alone? I have not been here for eighty years, I want to see whether I can find the house where I was born.' So he went by himself, found the house, in which was an old woman. He said to the woman, 'Do you live here?' 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'I live here.' 'I am come to see this house,' he said. She replied, 'Ah, a great many *braw* ladies come to see this house—it is a great house, greater than a palace—for here James Montgomery was born!' And that old man was James Montgomery, the Christian poet, the man who wrote that beautiful hymn—

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,

Uttered, or unexpress'd—

The motion of a hidden fire,

That trembles in the breast.

That was the way James Montgomery began, that

was the way James Montgomery ended. God 'redeemed' him, brought him out to honour, and something better than honour, for he is gone to heaven now.

I will tell you now about God 'redeeming' a little girl in another way. Her name was Alvi, but she was always called Allie. She was three years old, and one day little Allie jumped upon her father's knee, and said, 'Pa, when's spring?' Her papa stroked her little curly head, and patted her on her cheeks, and she looked up and smiled and said, 'I fat as butter?'. She said again, 'I loves my pa, I does; I loves my pa'. And her papa loved her very much. She said, 'When's spring, pa?' The father said, 'Why do you want to know when spring is? Do you want to see the pretty flowers, and hear the birds sing, and play in the sunshine?' She said, 'No, pa; me go to church in spring?' 'Do you wish to go to church, Allie?' 'Very much, pa!' 'Why Allie?' 'God there, God there!' 'And do you love God, Allie?' 'Oh! so much, papa, so much!' 'Well, my dear,' papa said to little Allie, 'to-morrow is spring, spring will be to-morrow.' And little Allie jumped down from her father's knees, saying, 'To-morrow! to-morrow! Allie is so happy! To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow!' And she went about the house singing, 'Allie is so happy, to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow, Allie so happy'.

That night Allie was very tired, she wanted to go to bed an hour before her proper time. During the night she fell into a burning fever and they sent for a doctor. When he came he shook his head, and said, 'Too late! too late! nothing can be done'. They sent for four doctors, and all said, 'Too late! too late!' And when the morning came, little Allie was dead, she was gone to heaven. Her mamma stood and looked at her, and thought of what she had said the day before, 'To-morrow, to-morrow, Allie so happy to-morrow!' and she wiped away her tears at the thought. So God 'redeemed' little Allie.

IV. Now 'the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, *bless the lads*'. Jesus likes to 'bless'. I think some people think He likes to punish, that He is very severe; but He is not. He likes to 'bless,' and nothing but 'bless'. Jacob didn't know Him so well as you know Him.

When Christ came, what did He do? Don't you know? He 'blessed the lads'. Don't you remember that Jesus 'took the little babes in his arms (I don't know whether they were boys or girls, perhaps both), put His hand upon them and blessed them'. We are sure He loves to 'bless' little boys and girls. There are a great many places in the Bible where it says Jesus loves to 'bless' little children.

Shall I tell you what the high priest did? If you will attend to it you will see what I mean. Once in the year the high priest of the Jews went into the holy place in his common clothes. He stood there a little while, and then you would have seen him come out again in beautiful clothes, his priestly clothes, such



beautiful, magnificent clothes! And when he came out in his priestly clothes, he stood at the door, lifted up his hands, and blessed all the people.

Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He went to heaven in His common clothes: He went to heaven like you and I almost; but He will come out so grand, so beautiful, and when He comes out from the holy place, He will stretch His hand over the world, and say, 'Come, ye blessed children of my Father'. He will come to 'bless' us. He is always 'blessing'. He began preaching by 'blessing'. He 'blessed' little children. He 'blessed' the Apostles when He arose from the grave. He was always 'blessing'. Jesus loves to 'bless' you. Nobody loves you as Jesus loves you, and He is always 'blessing' you, 'Bless the lads!'

Will you turn to the book of Chronicles, there is an account of a young person who asked God to 'bless' him (1 Chron. iv. 10), 'And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.' There you see was a young person who asked God to 'bless him indeed,' and God did so.

If you want to know whom God will 'bless,' read the eleven first verses of the fifth of Matthew, and there you'll find whom God blesses. And, oh! what a blessed, happy thing it is to be a child whom Christ blesses!

Shall I tell you how you'll feel? I cannot tell all, I will tell you a little. There was a good man once, who said that all his life through he always fancied that he felt his mother's soft hand upon his head; and he said it kept him from a great many sins, and always made him feel very comfortable when he was in trouble.

Now if you are one of the children whom God 'blesses,' you will always feel, wherever you go, 'Christ's hand is upon my head, laid there to bless me'. You will feel, 'He has set me apart'. What a happy thing wherever you go, at play or work, out of doors or indoors, 'Christ's hand is upon me, and He is blessing me'.

I will tell you another feeling you'll have. What a difference it makes when the sun comes out! How cheerful it makes everything look! Now if you are one of God's dear children, it will always be sunshine.

There was a little girl, so good, so affectionate, so kind to everybody, that she went by the name of 'The little bit of blue sky,' because she was always so bright, and sunny, and happy. I wish you all went by that name. But if you are God's child, you will always be happy; you will always go about like 'a little bit of blue sky'.

Then, perhaps, when you grow up to be old men and women, you will be able to tell somebody what I am telling you, you will be able to say how kind God has been to you 'all your life'. Who knows? Perhaps you'll look back some day, oh! a long time hence,

if God lets you live, and you will say, 'I remember going into a church at Brighton, on the 10th day of June, 1860, and remember the clergyman preaching about the "Angel that redeemed us from all evil," and he told us that if we loved God, we should be so happy and blessed, and be like "a little bit of blue sky," and that Christ's hand would be upon our heads; and I have found it much better than he told us; he was very stupid not to tell us more. It was a thousand times more than that. It is all come true, and much more than true: he didn't tell us half enough!'

Perhaps you will say that. Perhaps you'll have your grandsons and granddaughters come to sit on your knees, and you will say to them, 'The Angel which redeemed me from all evil all my life, the dear Saviour that has been so kind, and made me so happy, and laid his hand upon me, bless the girls, bless the boys'. You will be able truly to say this text, 'The Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads!'—  
JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### INSTABILITY UNSUCCESSFUL

'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'—GENESIS XLIX. 4.  
REUBEN was the eldest son of Jacob. The eldest brother and sister ought always to be the most useful; the only way to be useful is to be kind. I do not know whether I am speaking to anybody who is the eldest of a family. Perhaps I am, and perhaps some day you may have to take the place of your father and mother, because your dear father and mother may be gone; they may die; and then you must expect all the younger brothers and sisters to look up to you, and respect you, so that you may do a great deal of good. Therefore, you should always be very kind, and live every day in such a way that your brothers and sisters may respect you; you must be very kind and consistent, and also holy.

Little Julia was a very uncommon little girl, and her father and mother died when she was only fourteen years old. She had three younger brothers and sisters, and was very kind to them. They used to say they would rather be with Julia than with anybody. And one Sunday somebody went to see them, and he found them all very happy, but they were crying, yet they were very happy indeed. And the reason they cried was this, they had been reading about Jesus. And the gentleman who called said, 'Why do you cry about Jesus?—you have often read about Jesus'. 'Oh, yes, we have often read about Him, but then nobody is like Julia—nobody reads like her; we feel her reading more than we do the clergyman's.'

Now she was a nice elder sister. And whoever is the eldest boy or girl in any school or family, fills a very important place. I do not know who is the eldest boy or girl among those I am speaking to; but whoever is the eldest ought to be very good, and ought to say, 'I must live a Christian, that all others may look up to me'.

Some years ago there was an eldest boy in one of our religious schools—it was a school at Marlborough

—and he was a Christian boy, and the younger boys loved him, and they said that he did more good than the master; he was such a Christian boy. I will not tell you his name, though I know it—he was always first in every good thing—first in loving and fearing God; and he did such good in Marlborough that many boys said they owed a great deal indeed to that boy. He was the eldest.

Reuben is the eldest, and therefore you will see his father calls him, in the verse before the text, 'the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power,' and he calls him too 'unstable as water'. Reuben had one great fault, and that spoiled him. Do you know what it was? He was 'unstable'.

What does that mean? 'Unstable.' I will tell you what that word means exactly; it means that his character did not stand; he was always changing; he was not steady to one thing; he was not a firm character; and because he was not a firm or steady character, it spoiled all.

Now it says here, you see, that an 'unstable man' is like 'water'. Shall we think how he can be like 'water'? There are several sorts of water—what water shall we think of? There is the sea, that is all water, and you know the sea is very restless—it does not keep still—it is not the same one day as it is another day—it occasionally looks a different colour, it sometimes looks green, sometimes blue, sometimes a kind of purple, sometimes whitey-brown; and then it is always tossing about. You remember it says in Isaiah lvi. 20, 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt'. I do not think that this is what the word means.

Do you know how 'water' is made? Water is made up of numbers and numbers of little round things called 'globules,' little spheres; and they touch one another only at points, just like marbles in a bag; they cannot stick to one another. To speak properly, there is not much attraction or cohesion, because they are little round things; but they may be easily separated.

Now a piece of wood is altogether different, because it is close, it is not composed of little round things. We can put our hands into a basin of water and move it about, but we cannot put our hands into a piece of wood—it is too firm; but as water sticks so little together, you can easily move it. If you put some water in a basin on a table and you walk across the room, the water will move by the shaking; and even if you breathe upon it, the breath will cause it to move. For this reason it is so 'unstable'.

And you cannot, you know, make water stand up by itself. Supposing you get some water, and try to make a pillar of the water, you cannot do so. If you try to make water stand up by itself it will not stand up. No, not even the most wonderful man that ever lived in the world could make water stand up like a pillar. So a man that is 'unstable' cannot stand; he is always moving, that is what it means.

Think of the sea—think of the water in the basin

—how it moves by a little touch. You may try, but I am sure you cannot make water stand up. It is said of some people they are just like 'water,' they cannot stand; they are always moving, always changing—'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel'.

Now I wonder if I am addressing any of you who are like Reuben. You find that now and then you have very good feelings; then these feelings all pass away; you cannot keep them. Perhaps some of you now,—if not now, some of you can recollect a time when you used to read the Bible at home: when you were very little children you have read to your father or mother; do you remember how sometimes you used to think when you were reading the Bible—perhaps you were only little children, and only just able to read at all—you have felt so religious and looked so happy. Are you as good as you were when you were very little? Can you say now, 'I read the Bible as I did then'?

Will you look at Hosea vi. 4—we will all read it together—'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.'

Are you like that? Does all your religion soon pass away, soon go? It is very often the case with little children. I will tell you how it is. You kneel down to say your prayers, and before you have gone through them your thoughts travel I don't know where; your thoughts all wander. Then you go to other things. You go to your studies; you may be very diligent; you commence well; you open your books and begin to study, but before you get a very little way you have looked at something which sends your thoughts all wandering about; you do not keep steady; you are 'unstable'.

Then I will tell you another thing I think about some of you: that you determine that you will be good, and love God, and do what is right; and yet, after perhaps a very little time, you break your resolution. You are 'unstable'.

There is another verse in Hosea I should like you to read, chapter vi. 8. It is a very singular verse: 'Ephraim is a cake not turned'. Done on one side and not on the other. Have you two sides? One side looks very different from the other. To see you on one side people would say, 'What a religious boy that is! What a religious girl that is!' But, looking at the other side, people would see that you did not give God your whole heart; all is not given to God. You make resolutions, but you do not keep them. Will you look at Matthew xxi. 30? 'And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.' Have you not sometimes said to God, 'I go,' and afterwards go not? You make resolutions and break them.

I will tell you a sad story. An old man was lying on a sick and dying bed, and he sent for all his children; when they gathered around him he said something like this: 'My dear children, never

grieve the Holy Spirit. Take warning by me. When I was a little boy I had often religious instructions, but I did not take much account of them till I was about sixteen. Then I had very strong religious feelings—I had great convictions of sin, and I remember what I did. I remember saying to myself, "I must become a Christian, I must be religious, but I am very young now; there are a great many pleasures, and I will take my pleasure now, but will become religious soon."

"And so I put it away, and went on till I was twenty-five—just after I was married—and then came another, when it seemed as if the Holy Spirit was striving with me again, for He was very patient with me, and I had very strong religious feelings, and something seemed to whisper to me, "Now, now." I remember what I did then. I said, "Now I am married, and I must attend to my wife, to my home, and my children; I cannot forget them just now."

"And so it went on till I was forty. And when I was forty I remember how the Spirit worked in my heart again, and urged me very strongly to decide for God. And again I said, "I am a man of business, I can't do it while I have to keep up my business; when I give up my business, then I will give my whole heart to God."

"And so it went on for another ten years, till I was fifty, and then it once more came to me and said, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." I put it away more easily than I did before; I thought that soon I should be a very old man, and then I should be infirm and be obliged to stop indoors, and then it would be the time to be religious. But now I lie upon my sick-bed, and now it does not seem as if the Holy Spirit is with me; He does not seem to draw me. I listen, I listen; but I quenched the Spirit—I stifled conviction. I have gone through life without Him, and now He seems gone! "Quench not the Spirit." And he died.

I am not going to say whether that man was saved or not—God only knows—he may be; Jesus may have saved him. I know he was very unhappy indeed, but he was a very old man to look back and think when he was dying that he had been so 'unstable'.

Now I will tell you one more thing in which I think you are like the 'water'. Don't you find that you are very different when you are with different sorts of people? When you are with good people, you feel how pleasant it is to be good! Ah, and when you go with another sort of people, wicked people, then you are like the wicked people, and you act like them, and feel like them! You are always like the people you are with—changing your character, and striving to please everybody.

There is a very awful instance in the Bible of a man who did that. Do you know who it is? Pontius Pilate—he was always like the people he was with. When he was with Christ, he was like a Christian; when he was with a Jew, he was like a Jew; and when he was with a Roman, he was like a Roman; and just see what he did. He at last became so

wicked that he crucified Christ! He was a weak character. 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'

Now I think you see how you are like 'water'. Do you remember whether it is so? I think it is. Sometimes you have very good feelings, and they pass away like 'the dew' in the morning. I think you make good resolutions and break them again. I think you act according to the people you are with. And in all these things you are 'unstable,' like the 'water'.

Now God has said that if you are 'unstable' like the 'water,' you 'shall not excel'. If you are restless and changeable—if you are easily moved, like the 'water' in the basin, by the breath of what anybody says, or the footsteps of a companion—if you cannot stand up you will never be great. Just turn to St. James, and see what he says about that (chap. 1. 6-8), 'For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' If you are undecided in religion, you will be undecided in everything; it will make you a changeable character in everything; and then you will never be a great man, or a great woman; you will never do anything very great; you may be saved, but you will never be what I wish you all to be, a useful man or woman—great in earth and great in heaven—what God calls great. Reuben was never great, though he was the eldest; no, Reuben never did any great things because he was 'unstable'.

Now I come to the all-important thing. Are you very weak? Which is weaker—your bodies or your souls? You have not very strong bodies, but your souls are weaker than your bodies.

A good old divine, one of the old Puritans, who lived a long time ago in England, says that he always had a broken wine glass, without the bottom, and around the wine glass he used to have the text written, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe'. His soul was like the wine glass. To remind him how weak he was, he had this wine glass before him with the text written around it, 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe'.

How can we become more firm and strong, that we may 'excel'—that we may all be useful Christians? That is what I want you to think about.

I. One thing is (and I am going to tell you four things), to keep your promise, to be consistent and decided. That is one thing. Let us look at something which does not change. It helps us very much if we want to do anything steadily, to look steadily at steady things. For instance, when a man is steering a ship, he must not look at the waves, he must look at the compass, or at some star; or when a man is ploughing a furrow, he must not look close to him, but at some object at the end of the field, and then the furrow would be straight; and if you want to walk along a plank, you must not look on the plank, you must look at the end. Do that with your soul.

What is the most unchangeable thing in the world? What? Who is it that has not 'a shadow of turn-



ing'? Do you remember who that is? If you will look at James i. 17, you will find it says that God has 'not a shadow of turning'; and now most likely your Bibles are open in the right place to find Hebrews xiii. 8; there we read of One who never changes, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'. Oh think of that. He changes not, therefore He is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'. We ought to be thankful that we have a stable God. Think how unchangeable Jesus Christ has been to you ever since you were born.

II. This is one thing; now I come to the second. You will find, if you live long enough and think about it, that you cannot stand, and your soul cannot stand by itself. As soon as you get a vine in your garden, and you wish to make that vine a splendid tree, you bind it around something—all the little creepers must be entwined about something for that purpose, else it will not become beautiful; and, oh! we are all of us creepers, we cannot live and grow unless we creep.

Well, let us look at Psalm lxi. 2, 'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I'. What a pretty prayer! 'Oh, I am a poor, weak, little girl (says one), I cannot keep my good resolutions; oh! 'lead me to the Rock that is higher than I,'—that is, 'Jesus Christ: He is the Rock, and He will hold me up. And I shall twine around Christ, and shall get strong, because He is strong.'

I will tell you about a man who lived some time ago. When he was a boy, he was very passionate, and often became very angry. This little boy had a very good mother—a kind, pious mother; and this mother used to read the Bible with him every morning, and she did what a great many good mothers do, when she had read a passage she used to say to the boy, 'Let us take a verse and think of it during the day—have it for our motto for the day'. And one morning, when this little boy had been in a great passion, and had been a very naughty boy indeed, when he went to read to his mother, she chose the sixty-first Psalm, and they read it together, and she said, 'Now, my dear boy, let us choose out of this Psalm a verse that shall be our text for the day; and I think the best will be, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I"'. And then she explained to him that Jesus Christ was 'the Rock,' and that he could not conquer his temper if he did not go to Jesus Christ for help, and if he loved Jesus Christ he would be able to conquer himself; and he said, 'I know I shall, I am sure I shall, I will conquer myself; I feel so different that I am sure I shall never be angry again'.

But, before the breakfast was over, the little boy was in a passion; yet when he was in that passion his text came to his mind, 'O lead me to the Rock that is higher than I'; and he was conquered much sooner than was generally the case, because he offered up the prayer, 'O lead me to the Rock that is higher than I; He will conquer for me'.

That boy lived on, and had a great many troubles in life. He was a young man who was very unkindly

treated. I will not tell you who it was; but he said he found his text like a talisman—that is, a sort of charm; and whenever he was getting angry, he thought of these words, 'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I; and I shall conquer'.

And when that man came to lie upon his dying bed, a minister went to see him, and he said, 'What shall I read?' And he said, 'Oh, read the sixty-first Psalm—I owe everything to that—read it; oh, read it on'; and when the minister came to the end of the second verse,—'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I,'—the sick man cried out, 'Stop, stop; I can't tell you what I owe to my mother who pointed out to me that verse when I was a little boy. She taught me to say, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I"; and so I conquered.'

If there is a passionate boy or girl in this church—if there is one who cannot do as he or she wishes, remember that little prayer, and say, 'Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I'.

III. Now I must go on to my third point. If you are a weak character, and know it, you must not expose yourself to temptation. For instance, if you are a weak character, you must not be intimate with worldly people—you must not go and make a bad boy or girl your friend; you will be sure to be like such a one. You must not go in danger's way; where you know there is a tempter, you must not go.

Supposing a doctor came and said to you, 'Now you are a person who will very easily take a fever,' would not you take great care not to go near a place where you knew there was a fever? Would not you be very careful? Supposing the cholera were very bad about, and you were told you must be particularly careful what you ate or drank, for you would easily take the cholera. Would not you be careful about your diet? I tell you, as the physician of your soul, that you are a character that will easily catch sin. Then, for God's sake, don't go near to it—to danger; don't go in temptation's way, lest you catch that most contagious disease—sin.

IV. Once more. Take good care that you have some good foundation as you are so 'unstable'. We may be easily led—take care to have a good foundation.

Some time ago a ship was wrecked on the coast. She was riding at anchor, but she slipped her anchor, and so, drifting, ran on shore. The sea was running very high; only a few were saved on that dreadful night; they were saved by swimming on shore, or by getting on planks. There was one man on board ship who was as calm as possible on that terrific night. One of the sailors went to him and said, 'Do you not know the danger? Don't you know we have lost our anchor, and are drifting on to the shore? Our destruction is certain.' 'Oh, I know, I know,' he replied, 'I have an anchor for the soul, a castle built upon a rock, sure and steadfast.' And it was that which gave him such stability; because he had the anchor of the soul, he could do anything.—  
JAMES VAUGHAN.

# EXODUS.

## THE ARK OF BULRUSHES

'And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.'—EXODUS II. 3.

How many Arks are mentioned in the Bible? With what persons were they associated, and of what material were they made? I can think of three—Noah's Ark, made of gopher wood; Moses' Ark, made of bulrushes; and the Ark in the Tabernacle, which we may call Aaron's Ark, made of shittim wood, overlaid with gold. These three Arks were very different in size, in shape, and in appearance. Noah's Ark was like a very large house, made to float as a ship on the water. Aaron's Ark was a small oblong box, plated with gold, and was carried by staves on men's shoulders. Moses' Ark, which I am now to speak of, was something like a clothes-basket.

I. **The Appearance of the Ark.**—Moses' Ark was, as I said, not a big floating house like Noah's Ark, but more like a good-sized clothes-basket. Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, was afraid that the children of Israel would multiply too fast, and become too many for him to manage; so he made a cruel law, that every little boy that was born should be cast into the river Nile, in which, if he was not drowned, he would stand a good chance of being eaten up by the crocodiles. At this time a very beautiful little boy was born, and his Hebrew mother, when she saw that he was a goodly child, hid him in her house for three months. 'When she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes.' She plaited the rushes into a sort of basket, and to keep the water out she daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put her baby into it. Would he not get very dirty and sticky with the pitch? No doubt she lined the ark with dry leaves and linen to keep the pitch from his clothes. Might not the crocodiles bite through the basket, and make a dinner of the baby after all? Crocodiles, it is said, do not like papyrus or bulrushes, and so she hoped her baby would be safe.

II. **The Inmate of the Ark.**—Noah's Ark was a great house, and contained Noah and his wife, his three sons, and their wives, and a whole menagerie of animals, from the elephant to the mouse. The Ark of bulrushes was no bigger than a basket, and only contained one little three months old baby. But that little baby grew up to be one of the greatest men that ever lived. He led the great host of the children of Israel through the waters of the Red Sea, and through the great and terrible wilderness to the borders of Canaan—the promised land; he gave them, under the guidance of God, a code of wise laws

for their government; and he wrote a large part of the first five books of the Bible. He became one of the greatest men the world ever saw, after being saved in his infancy in this wonderful way from Pharaoh, and the crocodiles, and the Nile. Now, what was his name? His mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. 'And she called his name Moses' (which means 'drawn out'); 'and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.'

III. **The Safety of the Inmate of the Ark.**—Several persons were caring for the safety of the little baby Moses.

First, there were *his parents*. He 'was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child' (Heb. xi. 23). The word 'proper' does not mean a well-behaved and good child, though I have no doubt that little Moses *was* all that; but it means a goodly or beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment, but set it at defiance.

Then there was *his sister Miriam* who stood afar off to know what would be done to him. How anxiously she would watch the little Ark, and how frightened she would be if a crocodile came in sight!

Then there was *Pharaoh's daughter*. She came down to bathe in the Nile, and when she saw the Ark among the flags by the river-side, she sent one of her maidens to fetch it. She opened the Ark, and there was the baby! What a start she would get! It very naturally began to cry. Pharaoh's daughter had a kind heart, and said, 'This is one of the Hebrews' children'. Miriam was on the watch close by, and, like the clever girl she was, she said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?' 'Go,' said Pharaoh's daughter. And whom should Miriam bring but the little baby's own mother! Pharaoh's daughter engaged her as nurse on the spot. We may be quite sure that she did her duty faithfully, and was a kind and tender nurse to her own dear little boy.

IV. **The Lesson of the Ark—Faith.**—'By faith Moses . . . was hid three months of his parents' (first in the house, and afterwards in the Ark): 'and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.' Why? Because they had faith in God. Pharaoh, no doubt, was a great king, but God was greater. Pharaoh was mighty, but God was *Almighty*. They believed in God though they could not see Him, and believed that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, so they committed their baby to God's loving care, 'as seeing Him who is invisible'. That showed great faith. 'This God is our God for

ever and ever,' and as He took care of little Moses, He will take care of little boys and girls to-day, whose parents put their trust in Him.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 164.

### *The Ark of Bulrushes*

'And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.'—EXODUS II. 3.

I COULD show you that in history two baskets at least have rendered very valuable service. The first helped to save the life of Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, when as yet he was but a little child, three months old; the other preserved the life of Paul, the greatest Apostle, just at the beginning of his public ministry. Thus these baskets are well worthy of notice, and I have no doubt that if people could only find them to-day they would be considered very valuable relics.

We will now try to learn a few things about the *first basket*—namely, *the one which Jochebed, the mother of Moses, made for her boy*. Moses was born in very troublous times. The Israelites were in bondage, and it was ordained by law that every little Hebrew boy who was born was to be drowned; so that there should be no men among the Israelites in future days to resist the power of the tyrant. Jochebed thought that her little boy was far too good to be drowned. 'When she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.' She came to the conclusion that he was a *very charming baby*. Your mother came to that conclusion about you, thought you were the best-looking baby she had ever seen except your brother, and so she kept awake many a night to watch over you and to nourish your tender life. The neighbours perhaps wondered what she could see in you, but she was only surprised that other people did not love you as much as she did. The mother of little Moses, like yours, saw a great deal in him worth loving, thus she hid him for three months.

But it is a difficult task to hide a baby. The little darling will cry occasionally, and exercise his lungs in different ways, and Moses was as fond of that diversion, probably, as most children. Thus there was danger of the little fellow's voice being heard outside the house by the Egyptian detectives, who were constantly on the look-out for little Hebrew baby-boys.

At this time people in Egypt used to make little baskets, bassinets, and a great many other useful and ornamental articles, of 'bulrushes'—or rather the *papyrus*, that grew abundantly on the banks of the Nile, and the various canals throughout Egypt. Probably Jochebed had made a beautiful bassinette for her little baby, but now she had to turn it to a slightly different use. She had to make a little boat of it, so she daubed it with 'slime'—that is, either

the mud of the Nile, which when quite dried becomes waterproof, or bitumen—'and with pitch'. What care she must have taken in doing this! and when she had finished, how keenly she would look into all the corners and see if there was a small hole anywhere through which the water might enter! Then, I think, she would manage to find sufficient float in some secluded spot upon which she could float the ark, and thus find out any possible leakage; and last of all, she would put little Moses in it, and see whether it would bear him, or whether, if he turned over in his bassinette, it would topple over. Having satisfied herself on these points, and many others that would readily occur to her, I imagine her taking up the little basket and its precious burden in the dead of night, and taking Miriam with her. She could not trust anyone else to place little Moses near the water. Miriam was only about twelve years of age; while Amram, the father of Moses, although he had a share in hiding the child during the past three months (see Heb. xi. 23), had not the necessary tact to place Moses now just in the right place among the flags (or *weeds*) on the river's brink. Fathers are puzzled on such occasions: they cannot tell where to put babies and bassinets; mothers must do that, especially in a difficult case like this.

Jochebed laid the little ark among the weeds and bulrushes that grew by the river's side, very near the place where she had noticed Pharaoh's daughter and her maidens take their walk after bathing. She had also heard that Pharaoh's daughter—so tradition tells us—was a married lady who, having no children of her own, was nevertheless very fond of them. Hence she put the ark just in a place where it might appear that it had drifted on the stream. She felt sure that if that royal lady but once saw her bonny babe she would be sure to love the child. So she told Miriam, 'My child, I must leave you now, for the day is dawning, but God will take care of you and your little baby brother. I have made the ark of bulrushes, for they say that crocodiles have no liking for this plant. But there are no crocodiles near this place, or Pharaoh's daughter would not so often visit it. Besides, there is One above who took care of Joseph in the pit, brought him to this land and made a ruler of him. That God will take care of your brother, and—who shall tell!—perhaps He will make another ruler of him, and a deliverer of His people.' Many were the instructions given to the child how she should watch afar off, and yet be near enough to hear and see, and what she should say to anyone who might find the child; and then a silent prayer from a mother's heart would ascend to heaven for the two children as she kissed them and bade them a fond *adieu* in the darkness of that night.

You know the history: 'And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to



fetch it. And she opened it and saw the child; and behold the babe wept—the old trick of babies, and much honoured in the observance to-day—‘and she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children’. This was just what the mother of the child had expected. Miriam, finding that her mother’s anticipation was fulfilled, was encouraged now to draw near, and do just what her mother had told her. She thought she knew a capital nurse for Moses, and said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?’ She felt that no one could nurse a Hebrew child like a Hebrew mother—and especially one mother she knew. You know the result: how Miriam was sent and Jochebed was permitted to nurse her own baby-boy, and was paid good wages for her trouble.

Ah! Jochebed was quite right. It was by faith that she had hid her child, and when she put Moses in the ark of bulrushes, and placed that ark on the river’s brink beneath the heaven of God, she knew that not only Miriam, but also God Himself, would watch over that child. God wanted a man who would be the deliverer of His people from bondage, one who should give to them His law, and lead them through the wilderness Canaanward; hence that little basket of bulrushes was to Him a special trust. The mother’s fondest hopes were far more than fulfilled in that child’s life; and little did Miriam realise how great that little child was to become.

Thus the story of a little basket, made by a mother’s loving hand and daubed with mud and pitch, in humble style, is the story of a mother’s love, and a sister’s watchful care, being honoured of God by a wonderful deliverance. Now, the God who took care of little Moses amid the many dangers by which he was surrounded, takes care of you, will suffer no evil to befall you and no plague to come nigh your dwelling. Probably He shelters you with a father’s care, a mother’s love, and a sister’s or brother’s sympathy, but in any case he watches over you Himself, and with such a Guardian what have you to fear!—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children* (1st Series), p. 97.

### TO THE RESCUE!

‘And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.’—EXODUS II. 11.

I. You all know the story of Moses: how, when he was quite a little fellow, about three months old, and unable to do anything for himself, he was nearly killed by a cruel king; and how his mother and his sister managed to save him in the ark of bulrushes, how they got him even into the house of Pharaoh the king, and how he was brought up and cared for as the son of the king’s daughter.

It is a wonderful and delightful story, and we should like to know a good deal more about the childhood and boyhood of Moses. He grew up to be a great writer: there is not a better story-teller in

the Bible. How splendidly could he have told the story of his own childhood! One wishes he had told us something about his school, about his masters, and what lessons he had; but he has not done so, we can only guess. We know this, that he had a very good schooling, and grew up to be a very learned man; and the point of my text for you children is this: There came a time when Moses was grown up, a time when he came out and looked upon the world for himself; and what he saw was a very sad sight. He saw the Hebrews, his own brethren, his countrymen, in slavery—poor slaves, half-naked, badly fed, and brutally used. And this thing was brought before him in a very striking manner. For on the first day when he seems to have gone out, he saw an Egyptian actually smiting a Hebrew, and the blood of Moses boiled at the thought that this Egyptian should be smiting one of his own countrymen. He did very wrong in killing the Egyptian: that was a thing he had no right to do; but the question came to him something in this way. What was *he* to do in the matter? Was he to go and live in Pharaoh’s palace, having an easy, soft life for himself, and never lifting a little finger to help his own people? Well, he might have argued a good deal on *that* side. He *might* have said, ‘What can I do? I am only one, and I am not very clever, as one should be who seeks to lead men.’ He was not a good speaker; words did not come quickly to Moses; he could not make moving speeches to the people; he stuttered and stammered and was slow in speech, and that generally makes people rather timid and shy. And so he might have said, ‘What can I do? am I to go and rise against Pharaoh to help these people?’ He might have said that, but somehow he didn’t. Perhaps he knew the story of how *he* had been saved; of how he had been put in the ark of bulrushes by his mother and sister, who risked their lives to save him. And that, I think, was burning in the heart of Moses. His heart was so full of pity for his poor countrymen who had no ark to save *them*; and he felt so sorry for them, that, for their sakes, Moses gave up everything that he had in life—every hope and every prospect,—came out of the palace, gave up his honourable place, gave up his hopes of office, gave up his easy life, gave up everything, in order that he might help and serve his countrymen.

II. He had a great Work to do.—He was able to take these people out of Egypt and lead them for forty years in the wilderness, and lead them to the borders of the Holy Land; and *God helped him to do it*. ‘*He lived as one seeing the Invisible*’ (Heb. xi. 27). He always felt as if God were quite close to him; and though of course he couldn’t see God, he felt that God was near. He was strong and brave and noble because he always felt that God was *there*, close to him.

III. Well, now, what has all this got to do with you boys and girls who live to-day? Oh, it has a great deal to do with you! You, like Moses—you, too—are being greatly cared for; there is nothing

that is good for you but you have it; you have a great deal of kindness and love, more than any of you know. You will only know it in some future time, when you come to love as you have been loved. Moses was educated, and so are you being educated. Poor boys, the poorest in London, go to our Board Schools, where they are educated better than kings and princes used to be a few hundred years ago. Why, the very nobility could not read their own names. But you have a lot of love and care; and the day will come when you will be grown up; and you will, like Moses, go out and look around you; and you will see a great deal of wrong and cruelty in life.

And my question to you is this, What will you do when you are grown up, when you see the wrongs of the world? Will you help the *Egyptian* or the *Hebrew*? Will you help the oppressor or the oppressed? Will you swell the army of the devil, or will you swell the army of God? Will the world be better for you, or will it be worse? One of the two it is going to be. There are boys and girls in homes to-day—mind, not in low bad homes, but in nice beautiful homes—they are growing up, they are being educated, they read books, they have presents given them, and all that love can do is being done for them; and yet, when they grow up, they will choose to be bad men and women. The world will be sadder because of them.

Now, what are you going to do? What are you going to be? Are you thinking about it? Have you made up your minds which class you will join? Have you said, 'With God's grace in our hearts we will help the oppressed; we will help to make this world brighter, more like God and heaven; we will not add a finger's weight to the burden pressing men down?'

Just ask God to help you. Try to live as always in God's presence; and He will raise up some of you and make you great men and women, and the world will be better for you. As long as this world lasts it will be better for what Moses did. Try you to belong to the number of those who will make the world of men and women happier and better, nobler and holier, as long as it lasts. Those that turn many to righteousness, they shall be as stars for ever—shining always—always giving light, and always being beautiful. God help you now, while you are young, to have great thoughts in your minds, to nurse great hopes in your hearts, and to pray great prayers to God, so that you shall belong to the noble men and women, the saviours of the world and not its destroyers.—J. MORGAN GIBBON, *In the Days of Youth*, p. 1.

#### THE WAY BETWEEN

'And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew (R.V. smote) the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.'—EXODUS II. 12.

'He looked this way and that way, and when he saw no man'—then he did it! Isn't that the way you act when you are going to do something wrong?

You look this way and that way, to see if anyone is looking. Then you may be sure of it, when you begin to look this way and that way to see if anybody is watching, you are very likely going to do something wrong. A bad conscience always looks this way and that way; a good conscience doesn't, it just does what is right, and doesn't mind whether people see it or not!

Remember then it is not wise to look this way or that way unless you also look *that* way—upward—to God. God sees you even when no one else does, and this man found that out before very long. God saw what he had done, and God sent him into banishment for forty years for what he did then. That is a long time, forty years; but then sin is a very serious matter with God. Remember then, when you are tempted to look only this way or that way to see if anybody sees you, that you haven't looked the right way until you have looked up to God!

Think well of this also—you *can't* hide a sin. What did this man do? 'He slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.' Well, he couldn't hide anything he had done better than that, could he? If you saw ground dug up here or there, you might suspect something was wrong; but the *sand*—why, the sand is just like the sea, you can't make out one place upon it more than another: it is all alike. Yes; but what happened? Only two days afterwards, when this man who had killed the other was walking about, he saw two men having a fight, and he went up to separate them; then one of them turned round on him, and said, 'Oh! I suppose you are going to kill me like as you did the other man!' It was just as if the dead man had spoken to him! He thought he had concealed his sin so well that it would never be found out; and yet it was now plain that people knew about it!

No; you can never hide a sin. This person and that person may not find it out, but God knows all about it, and God one day is going to blow away the sand and show what you have hidden beneath it. Doesn't it make you afraid to sin? It does me.

Now though people have come to be very old and very wise, and to know many things, they have never found out any other way of keeping from sin than this—by loving Jesus *very much*. Try to do this; try to love Jesus very much, then you will never be afraid to look *that* way—upward; for you will like to do that, for you will know that Jesus is looking on you and loving you.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Churchette*, p. 245.

#### THE BURNING BUSH

'I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.'—EXODUS III. 3.

'The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.'—DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 16.

HERE we have the greatest teacher, a great scholar, a great sight, and a great truth. You are a scholar of God as Moses was—the big bell has rung for you,

and God has called you too by name; and a good scholar you shall be if you have Moses' spirit.

His *attention* was splendid. He looked and looked again; he halted; he turned aside; he stood still; he filled eyes and mind with the amazing object; he pondered it in his heart.

The first word for soldiers and scholars is *attention*. The word means a *stretching forth towards*, as of the little nestlings when they crane their necks over the edge of the nest for their food. The true scholar continues attending, for great truths are printed upon our minds as pictures are printed upon paper by chromolithograph. Each colour is printed by itself, so that there are some fourteen printings before the whole picture is conveyed to the paper. In the same way it takes time to impress any great truth upon our minds. Ideas are like chemicals: they need time and heat to tell. It is astonishing how much any child can learn when he attends with patience. The pity is that the preacher would often need to find words and ears too, for the heart is apt to play truant when God is the teacher.

*Wonder and curiosity* were strong in Moses as he said, 'I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt'. The Bible invites you into a wonderland of grace and truth. Thoughtful wonder is the mother of knowledge: it moves you, as it moved Moses, to ask the reason why.

Far seen across the sandy wild,  
Where, like a solitary child,  
He thoughtless roam'd and free;  
One towering thorn was wrapt in flame—  
Bright without blaze it went and came:  
Who would not turn and see?

*Holy fear* was strong in Moses as he put off his shoes from off his feet (ver. 5). To go barefoot in the East is a mark of humility.

The shepherd talks with God apart,  
And, as he talks, adores.

When you are learning the great things of God and the soul, you too are on holy ground, and should then put off the sandals of the soul—those soiled thoughts that come to our spirits from touching the world. And do not draw too near: have the sweet awe that fears to profane holy things. Some folks have little reverence, and come too near the mystic bush, so that their finer feelings are blackened and scorched by the fire. They grow rudely familiar with things divine.

*Humble obedience* was the fruit in Moses of this great object-lesson, for, at God's bidding, he went straight from the bush to Pharaoh. You learn all your lessons ill unless they make you obedient to the voice of God.

If you have these four marks—attention, wonder, holy fear, and humble obedience—you may claim to be among the schoolfellows of Moses; and like him, with your eyes full upon it, you will learn the lessons of the burning bush. Make this bush, then, the home of your thoughts. It is the first plant-emblem of the Jewish people as a whole.

Let us consider:

I. The Bush.

II. The Bush burning.

III. The Bush unburnt.

I. **The Bush.**—It was one of the common stunted growths you may see to-day in the desert: some root out of a dry ground; a bramble-bush, or heath, or thorny acacia, or tamarisk; one of the humblest of living shrubs, quite unlike the cedar, the oak, or the palm. And this child of the desert, without stateliness or grace, is a picture of the cause of God and Church of Christ, so far as the outward eye can see. How small the Church in Egypt then was compared with Egypt's idolatry. The Egypt of that day has been made to live before us by famous discoveries, and by books like those of Dr. Ebers, which wonderfully light up some pages of the Bible. In the museum at Cairo, the Pharaohs, with whom the Israelites had to do, grin at you from their mummy-cases. You may see their photos in the shop windows. Egypt's idol temples were then, as they still are in their ruins, among the wonders of the world, and enormously rich. Their idol-worship was most gorgeous, and upheld by all the power of the State. Jehovah's worship by its side was like a solitary heath-bush in a forest of the cedars of Lebanon.

What a very small cause Christ's seemed when He died on the cross! How majestically Pagan Rome overshadowed it! During the first three centuries there are only some ten or twelve short and scornful notices of Christ's Church in all the books of heathen writers; and yet soon after that the Church hurled heathen Rome from its throne, and conquered the world.

II. **The Bush Burning.**—'The bush burned with fire' (ver. 2), that is, it burned fiercely with real fire. It was no make-believe or pictured flame; the bush was steeped in fire. Horeb means 'dry,' that is, the parched desert. The shrubs there are good for burning, and in summer they are like tinder. Almost the only trade there to-day is in charcoal, which the Arabs make out of such bushes as Moses saw. The Bedawin of Sinai have to pay their taxes to the Egyptian Government in charcoal. This is the only coal known in Bible lands, and the making of it is now, as it always has been, a very important industry. In some places the Arabs have no other way of earning money, and one village is called 'the mother of charcoal'. Small pieces of it are burnt on a brazier. It was around such 'a fire of coals' that Peter and the servants of the high priest sat when he denied the Lord. It is to these David refters when he speaks of 'coals of juniper'. The traveller often meets Arabs on their way to Alexandria leading camels laden with charcoal; and he has to take care lest the bulky burdens on the camels' sides should come too near him.

The blazing fire in the bush was a symbol of the fierce persecution of Israel by Pharaoh; for God says (ver. 7), 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people'. Men often speak of the fires of persecution.



The burning bush is thus the emblem of many churches of the martyrs. Sometimes the words are added, *Ardens sed virens*—‘Flaming, yet flourishing’; or more frequently, *Nec tamen consumebatur*—‘Yet it was not consumed’. The same idea is represented by one of the emblems of the Waldensian Church, which is the lily among thorns—a lily untorn and undeflowered amid the thorns that threaten to destroy it.

**III. The Bush Unburnt.**—‘The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.’ Like the sun above him, it blazed, but was unconsumed. This is the great miracle of history. Egypt, Persia, Tyre, Rome—all the great nations of antiquity have been burnt down, but the bush lives. Yet thousands of times it has seemed utterly impossible that the Church could live; and yet it lives to-day, is larger than it ever was, and is spreading over the world. All the forces of evil have done their worst against it, and have failed. And more than that, the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. Their holy heroism has left a strong cheering light upon the paths of men. When the fires of persecution had, to all seeming, burnt the bush to the ground, it arose again, like the fabled phoenix, from its ashes. Some believe that the bush not burning is the bush consumed.

Smiles, in his book about the Huguenots, tells how an aged French Christian assured him that the Christianity of French Protestants would never be worth much till it had been again refined by the fires of persecution.

When Julian, the Roman Emperor, was doing his utmost to overthrow the Church, and erect the idols upon its ruins, the rhetorician Libanus, the friend of Julian, in scorn asked a Christian, ‘What is your Carpenter of Nazareth doing now?’ ‘He is making a coffin,’ was the quiet reply. Ere long Julian was in the coffin, and all the idols he had set up were swept away. It is said that with his dying breath he cried out, ‘O Galilean! thou has conquered’.

‘The good will of Him who dwelt in the bush’ is the reason why the burning bush is unburnt. ‘God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early’ (Ps. xli. 5). Christ has said, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’. These words should calm our fears, and should make us hopeful of the future of Christ’s cause on the earth. Surely God’s side must be the winning side. We should sow broadcast the good seed in faith. You may count the acorns on the oak, but you cannot count the oaks that may be in the acorn: you may know how many apples are on a tree, but you can never know how many trees are in the apple.

Thank God that a little child may share all the good things of this great kingdom, and do something to spread it throughout the world.

The visible Church in David’s day was laden with many imperfections, yet David greatly loved it, and did his best for it. The visible Church in Paul’s day

was very far from what it should have been, yet Paul strove to make it worthier of its name; and so you, as you grow up, should gladly give what help you can to the sacred society that Christ has planted in the world. But you belong to the Church only in name, unless you behave like Moses before the burning bush. God gives us his biography in three words, ‘Moses, my servant’. Like Moses, listen to God, choose God in youth, and remain faithful unto death.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object-Lessons*, p. 37.

## THE GREAT SIGHT

(For Good Friday)

‘I will now turn aside, and see this great sight.’—EXODUS III. 3.

I WANT each one of you to echo these words, and say to himself, ‘I will now turn aside, and see this great sight’. Turn aside from what? From the thoughts and works of the world, from the cares and pleasures of the day; and to see what great sight? The greatest, the most wonderful, the most glorious, and yet the most terrible of sights.

Do you know why this is called Good Friday? Because it is the day when Jesus Christ died on the cross. This is the great sight which I want to turn aside and see, Jesus *coming* on the cross. Try to turn your thoughts aside from the world, from your work, from your play, and fix them upon the dying Son of God. Where must we look upon this great sight? We must turn our thoughts to a spot outside the gates of Jerusalem, a slightly rising ground, called, probably from its shape, *Golgotha*, the place of a skull.

This is the great sight which I would have you look upon.

I. It is a great sight because it shows us a great mystery. God knows all things, and can do all things in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, yet He allowed the world to go on sinning for ages till He sent a Saviour to redeem it. Then whom did He send? Greater mystery still, He sent His own Son into the world, to take our nature, to be like us, only without sin; and more mysterious still, although Jesus was without sin, yet He suffered for sin, and died for sin, but not for His own. The whole world was lying in wickedness, and the wages of sin is death. All men have been, and still are born in sin, and all had committed sin, and so sentence of death had been pronounced on all. Jesus redeemed the world from that sentence by dying Himself, the Just for the unjust. Here then is a great mystery.

II. Again, it is a great sight on which we look to-day, because in it all the prophecies are fulfilled. Jesus, the seed of the woman, has bruised the head of the serpent, that old serpent the Devil, by conquering the power of sin; now in Jesus, the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the earth are blessed. The star, which Balaam foretold, has come out of Jacob, and the sceptre has arisen out of Israel. The familiar friend in whom He trusted, has lifted up his heel

against Jesus, as David long ago foretold. As Isaiah prophesied, the eyes of the blind have been opened, and the ears of the deaf have been unstopped; Jesus has been despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He has been wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we have been healed. As said the Prophet Zachariah, the King has come to the daughter of Zion, lowly, and riding upon an ass; and they have weighed for His price thirty pieces of silver, and they have looked on Him whom they pierced. They have parted His garments among them, and cast lots upon His vesture; He has made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death—for we know they laid Him in the rich man's sepulchre—all has been fulfilled which God spake by the mouth of His holy Prophets, which have been since the world began.

III. Again, this is a *great sight*, because in it all the types of Jesus are fulfilled. I have told you that many persons and things in the Old Testament are types, or signs, or shadows of our Lord. As in Adam all men die, so Jesus has become the *Second Adam* in whom all are made alive. Jesus, the true *Noah*, has brought an Ark to save us from the flood of sin, even His holy Church. Jesus, the true *Isaac*, has been born the Child of Promise, and been obedient unto death, and carried the wood for His own sacrifice, unto the mount of death. Jesus has come as the true *Melchizedek*, a Priest, a Prophet, and King, the King of Peace; He, the true *Joseph*, the dearly beloved Son, has been hated of His brethren, to whom He has been sent. He, the true Joshua (*Joshua* and Jesus are the same name, and mean Saviour), has led us to victory against our enemy; He, the Captain of our Salvation, will carry us across the Jordan of death to the good land of Paradise beyond. Jesus, the true David, has conquered Satan, the giant of wickedness; and now, as the Good Shepherd, He leads His people through green pastures, and beside still waters.

As we turn aside now to see this great sight, let us remember two things, first, that Jesus died for sin, and that all sin is therefore hateful to Him; and next that Jesus still lives to pardon us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Believe that every sin willfully committed is like a fresh nail in His dear hands and feet, a fresh thorn in His dear brow. Try to get the better of your sins, not from fear of punishment, but from love to Him Who suffered and died upon the cross that He might redeem us by His Precious Blood.

### THE GODS OF THE HEATHEN

'Thou shalt have no other gods but Me.'—EXODUS XX. 3.  
'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'—I JOHN V. 21.

'PROFESSING themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things' (Rom. 1.

22, 23). It is thus that St. Paul spoke of the most learned and civilised men of his age, the Romans, the Athenians, and the Egyptians. It is a well-known fact that the nations who did not enjoy the blessings of the Gospel have always shown, whatever may have been their knowledge in science, art, or literature, a wonderful ignorance concerning religion. The Egyptians worshipped an ox, the Persians the fire, and the Greeks and the Romans admitted a multitude of divinities, who, jealous of each other, quarrelled perpetually, and committed the most fearful crimes. Up to the present day, six hundred millions of heathens in the world know no better, and the idols they worship are really monstrous.

I. How can we wonder, when we come to think over all the follies of idolatry, that the prophets and the people of Israel should have laughed and scoffed at idols and at their worshippers. You all remember the story of Elijah upon the Mount Carmel, and how he mocked the prophets of Baal who called in vain to their god to bring down the fire of heaven upon their altar. 'Cry louder,' he said, 'either he is talking, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleepeth.' And the priests cried aloud, and cut themselves with knives till the blood gushed out upon them. And later, another prophet, Isaiah, to prove the folly of idolatry, describes in jest the making of an idol. A man, he says, heweth a tree in a forest. He will burn part of it and warm himself; with another part, he eateth flesh, he roasteth meat and is satisfied. He warmeth himself and saith, 'Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire.' And with the residue thereof he maketh a god, his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, 'Deliver me, for thou art my God' (IS. XLIV. 15, 16).

The words of Isaiah put me in mind of a little girl in one of the missionary schools in India. One day that the children had been repeating the second commandment, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,' etc., etc., she suddenly exclaimed, 'Oh! how foolish to worship idols! There is a large one at home, sitting with its legs crossed, and its eyes shut, so,' and the child assumed the posture she was describing. 'However loud we speak, it never hears or answers. My grandfather and my grandmother say that it is holy, but I can see nothing in it but an old and ugly piece of wood, covered with dirty paintings.' The other children tried to stop her, but she went on. 'As for myself, I shall love and serve the God whose eyes see through darkness, who can read in our hearts.'

II. But, although there is no harm in laughing at idols, still we ought to feel the deepest pity for the poor people who know no better, as their ignorance deprives them of so much happiness. You have parents who love you dearly and watch over you with constant care; you feel safe in their love, and you like to look at their picture as it lies in its pretty frame on your little work-table. Now, fancy a child whose parents would have been as full of solicitude

and of tenderness as yours have been, who would have gone through many privations to bring him up; but it happens that he has never seen them, and that they have even been represented to him as gloomy and exacting; instead of hearing of their love, people have told him that they were malignant and hard. Poor child, what treasures of tenderness he loses! He will never know either the sweetness of home or the comfort of pouring his troubles into an affectionate heart. His own heart, which the slightest token of love would have made so light, is oppressed by a feeling of loneliness; his life, which might have been easy and pleasant, is dark and gloomy. Well, the poor heathens who live in ignorance, and to whom nobody has ever spoken of Jesus and of the great love God has shown towards us, are like the child I was speaking of. It is not on that account alone that they deserve your pity, but also because the worship of such gods keeps them in a most shameful state of corruption and degradation.

III. But pity is not enough, we must also help them to shake off the yoke which keeps them down. It is not enough to declare war against their gods, we must also teach them to love our God. It is the work of our missionaries, and which amongst you will be one of them? Who can say whether some of the lads who listen to my words will not some day devote their lives to the good work? Oh, if my voice could kindle in your hearts the ambition of becoming soldiers of Christ! I know of no higher calling, as none requires more self-denial, more personal courage, and more love.

Years ago a collection for the missions was being made on a Sunday at the door of a church in England. There went by many rich people who threw both gold and silver into the plate, just as in the time of Jesus at the door of the temple at Jerusalem. There came last a poor little boy, who had not a farthing of his own; and when the crowd had gone by, he called out to the collector, 'Hold the plate lower, please, lower still!' 'Why so?' inquired the man. 'Because, as I have neither gold nor silver, I mean to give myself up to the missions.' And the boy who had spoken these words became a great missionary. Does not his example move your hearts?

A missionary, called Schwartz, had spent thirty years among the Indians, without reaping any fruit of his labours. He was lying upon his death-bed, satisfied to receive in heaven the reward which had been denied to him upon the earth, and praying God that another might reap where he had sown. Suddenly an Indian chief, whose hatred for the missionary was well known, entered the cabin.

'Say your prayers, for you are going to die,' said the savage man, lifting his tomahawk above the dying man's head. Schwartz began to pray, his face already full of heavenly peace, and in this, his last prayer, he did not forget the enemy who was threatening his life. But, O wonder, these words of love and forgiveness melted the heart of the murderer, the tomahawk slipped from his hand, and kneeling by the bedside of

the missionary, he entreated to be instructed in a religion which enabled a man to die with such feelings. He received the Gospel, and the whole tribe with him, so that Schwartz appeared before the throne of God carrying, as a crown of glory, the conversion of a whole tribe.

IV. And now I shall add a few words about yourselves. It is not enough to assist the missionaries in their war against the gods of the poor foolish savages; we must also wrestle with our own idols, for although you may not be aware of it, we are all more or less heathens. Our heart is like a sort of Pantheon, in which we have secretly enshrined our idols. After all, an idol is not always a stone or a piece of wood; it may be a particular taste or a liking which leads us to forget our duties. Look at that little boy, who, thinking only of his pleasure, has laid his book and his basket upon one of the seats in the public garden, and plays with his top instead of going to school. He worships his favourite idol, *the top*. And that other boy, who has spent all his pocket money at the pastrycooks, and has hidden himself from his parents to eat so many cakes and sweetmeats that he will be ill to-morrow, is he not worshipping his favourite idol, *the cake*? And that little girl who stays in bed every morning because it is so pleasant, and who, when already half-awake, shuts her eyes again, turns on the other side and goes to sleep again, so that she has to be called at least ten times, don't you think that she worships an idol, her *pillow*?

I must not forget the idol which finds the greatest number of worshippers, either among men or among children. It is the idol self. 'Me' is the god of those who neither like to give nor to lend, and of the children who set their own pleasure or their own comfort above that of others. It is to that little word that we owe the frequent use of the possessive adjectives which begin with the letter *M*. My place, my things, my pleasure. It has for initial letter a large gold *M*, twined with wreaths, which we find repeated on all the things belonging to it, *M M M*, and so on. We have given it the best place in our hearts, where we bring to it our tribute of incense and adoration.

Oh, let our motto be, 'War against idols, war without mercy, war against selfishness, idleness, carelessness'. Let God alone be the sole master of our hearts, and of our families, as He is of the whole world.—A. DECOFFER, *Sermons for Children*, p. 128.

'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.'  
—EXODUS XX. 7.

JAMES VAUGHAN of Brighton told this story in one of his sermons to children:—

Benjamin Field, a well-known clergyman, was staying at a Brighton boarding-house. 'At dinner, at the boarding-house, a young officer in the army swore. At the dinner table Mr. Field took no notice at all. He waited his opportunity. In the evening, when Mr. Field came in from his walk, he found this young man alone in the drawing-room. He said to him



"Sir, you hurt my feelings very much at dinner". The young gentleman said, "Did I? I am exceedingly sorry. I don't know what you refer to. Did I speak of a friend of yours in a way you did not like?" "That is exactly what you did," Mr. Field replied, "you spoke of my greatest friend in a way I did not like at all. *You swore*. And God is my greatest friend. And you spoke of my greatest friend in a way that pained me very much, and pained Him." Mr. Field talked to this young man a great deal; and he asked Mr. Field before he left the room, to pray that God would forgive him, and he did so; and every day, while Mr. Field stayed at Brighton, he went up to that young man's bedroom in the morning of the day, and prayed with him. That was the way to reprove him. The result was, I believe, that young man was converted, turned to God by Mr. Field reproofing him for swearing.<sup>1</sup>

'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.'—EXODUS XX. 8.

'May we lie in bed on the Sunday morning? Do you think we may have a longer lie?' I do, especially if we have been working our bodies. I am quite sure if anybody has been working very very hard during the week, he has a *right* to lie longer in bed on Sunday. His body wants rest. I do not see any objection myself to most people lying in bed a little longer on Sunday morning. Most people like it. It makes the Sunday happier, perhaps. I should advise it. At the same time I must say if any boy or girl would feel, 'I should like to get up very early on Sunday morning to read about Jesus Christ, and read good works,' if any boy or girl feels that, I would say, 'Blessed boy or girl!' I envy that boy or girl. Well done, boy or girl! who says, 'I want to get up, and think and read about Jesus Christ'. Happy boy! happy girl! That is best of all.—JAMES VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (4th Series), p. 183.

### THE PEARL OF DAYS

EXODUS XX. 8.

It would be difficult to say which is God's best gift to men, next to the gift of His Son, and the gift of His Spirit, and the gift of His Word. I dare say if you were to try to make out a list of the gifts of God, arranging them according to their value, it would be very difficult to know in what order to put them down, there are so many of them which are so very good; and as for making a full and correct list of them, I suspect we should never get to the end of it. I wish now to speak to you about one of these gifts of God. It is well to be often thinking and often speaking to each other about what God gives us, that we may love Him more, and be ever seeking to make a better use of His gifts.

I am not at all sure that many of you would name, among the foremost of our good things, the one which I am now to speak about. And yet, if we could get the opinion of all the good on earth, and of all the saints in heaven, we should have millions upon millions of voices sounding forth its praises, and

thanking God for it, as one of His greatest blessings to the sons of men. Some of God's people have loved it so well, that they have lived for it, laboured for it, written for it, suffered for it, died for it. One of these lies in the Grange Cemetery in Edinburgh, not far from the spot where Dr. Chalmers and other great and good men are buried. On the beautiful block of granite which marks his grave—just as on a soldier's tombstone would be engraved the name of the battlefield where he fought and fell—you find, besides his honoured name, the simple inscription of what is now to be my text:—

'In memory of Sir Andrew Agnew, Bart., of Loch-naw, born 21st March, 1793, died 12th April, 1850 — "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy".'

This single line may be regarded as this Christian champion's motto, which you would do well to study.<sup>1</sup>

From this you will gather that the gift to which I refer is the Sabbath.

Not many years ago this formed the subject of a number of prize essays, written by working men, who all sought to recommend the Sabbath to others, by telling what they themselves had seen and felt of its value. One of the essays sent in was found to have been written by a young working woman, and was afterwards published and dedicated to Queen Victoria, with this beautiful title—'The Pearl of Days'. I now take that as the title of this address, and shall try to show you that the name is well applied to the Sabbath. I have no doubt there are some days which stand out to you above all others, such as a birthday, or a Christmas or New Year's Day—some holiday which you always greatly enjoy, and would like to come round oftener than it does. Perhaps you would call one of these 'The Pearl of Days,' as prizing it above all others. And yet the Sabbath is the real 'Pearl of Days'. It should be so to you, as it is in the sight of God.

Will you turn to Exodus xx. 8: 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy'.

I have spoken of the Sabbath as 'The Pearl of Days'. It was spoken of as the 'Prince and Sovereign of Days' by a good man, long ago. It might be called the 'King of Days'. I wish I could make it as beautiful and attractive to you as I would. I wish I could get you to love it, so that, instead of it being a dull, tiresome, wearisome day, and as coming after Saturday, just like passing out of bright sunshine into a dark night—or out of a palace into a prison, it should be wearied for, all the week round, and received with songs of welcome when it comes. God meant it to be a happy day—the happiest of all the seven. He gave it to us as one of the best blessings He could bestow. When His people are recounting His various gifts to them, you find this getting a special place—'Thou madest known to them Thy holy Sabbaths'. So He Himself says, 'I gave them My Sabbath,' as if He had given them

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of Sir A. Agnew*, by Thomas M'Crie, D.D., LL.D.

something that did not belong to earth—something of heaven—as was indeed the case. Many—both old and young—have found it to be such, and have said so. We are told of one little boy, who loved his play and prized his Saturday as much as any of you, saying, ‘Count up my Sundays; tell me how many I have had in my life’. And when he was told he had had about three hundred, he exclaimed, ‘Oh, how many! How kind of God to give us so many; and in heaven it will be all Sunday together!’ Does that thought ever fill *your* heart with joy?

#### 1. Reasons for Observing the Sabbath.

1. We have *God's command*. This of itself should be enough for us. I sometimes hear boys, when told by a father or a mother to do such and such a thing, asking, ‘*Why* am I to do it?’ Now the less that word is on a boy's lips the better. If he is dutiful and right-hearted, it will be enough for him that he has a parent's orders. I can suppose one of you saying, regarding something, ‘I remember, when my father was in life, that he often told me to do this. I do not quite understand *why*, but I do not need to understand. It is enough for me to know that it is a right thing, and that he bade me. I have such love and respect for him, that I need no more than to have his command or wish; and though he has long been in his grave, I shall do it.’

And so it may well be, in regard to anything your Heavenly Father bids or forbids you to do. He has always good reasons for what He commands, and so, whether you fully understand it or not—whether you like it or not, you are always safe to do his bidding.

Now if there is one thing more than another which He is particular in commanding—it is the observance of the Sabbath. You hear His majestic voice again and again repeating, ‘Ye shall keep My Sabbaths’. On these tables of stone, written with God's own finger, and binding upon all men to the world's end, you read the inscription, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’. And if anyone should ask you why you observe the Sabbath, it should be enough to answer ‘God commands it’.

The whole of the Ten Commandments must stand or fall together. They are all equally binding, for all the world and for all time. None of them has ever been done away with. So long as it is God's command to have no other god before Him—not to worship Him by images—not to take His name in vain—not to dishonour parents—not to kill, or be impure, or steal, or lie, or covet,—so long is it God's command ‘to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’. God thus surrounds ‘The Pearl of Days’ with the guard of His law.

2. We have *God's example*. He acts towards His children as other wise and kind parents do. He does Himself what He bids us do. When He says to us, ‘Be merciful,’ it is added, ‘even as your Father who is in heaven is merciful’. In like manner, when the Lord Jesus says ‘Forgive,’ He also says, ‘even as I also have forgiven you’. You remember how He taught His disciples the lesson of humility and kind-

ness. He not only said, ‘Be humble and kind to each other. Do not think it beneath you to do anything for each other's good. Do not be always quarrelling as to which of you is to be the greatest.’ Nay, but He took a towel and girded Himself, and poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel saying, ‘I have given you *an example*, that ye should do as I have done to you’. He knew there was no way of teaching like that.

3. *God claims it as His own day*. I said the Sabbath was God's gift to men, and yet He gave it with a view to certain great purposes being served by it, and He still retains the right to say how men are to use it. Hence He calls it ‘the Sabbath of the Lord thy God’; ‘My Sabbath’; ‘My holy day’; ‘the Lord's Day’. And when it is used for other purposes than those for which it was given, it is an abuse of His gift—it is robbing Him of His right. You would be indignant if anyone were to say you were a thief. And yet the Sabbath-breaker is a thief, in the sense that he turns God's day to a use different from that for which it was given.

All the other days of the week He has given to men, to attend more especially to the things of this life. He says, ‘Six days shalt thou labour and *do all thy work*’. And yet with all the other six days of the week for such purposes, some people will encroach upon the seventh, and make it just like the rest.

4. *God is pleased and honoured by the keeping of it*. God is very jealous of His honour, and when He has given His command and example, and set forth His claim, His honour must needs be concerned in the matter. And so it is expressly said, ‘If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and *shalt honour Him*’. How He complains of Israel for having ‘polluted His Sabbath,’ one of the things for which He sent them into captivity. On the other hand, how He commended those who kept His day: ‘Thus saith the Lord, Unto those that keep My Sabbath, and choose the things that please Me, I will give a name and a place within My house better than of sons and of daughters’.

What you will do to please and honour a father or mother! And you can hardly do too much in that way. You tell us what they have done for you, and how deserving they are of all the love and honour you can show them. And will you not seek to please and honour God in His own way?

5. *It is a memorial of a completed creation work and of Christ's Resurrection*. Up to the time of Christ the Sabbath was the great memorial of God's finishing the work of creation.

Was not such an event worthy of being kept in mind? What a wonderful and beautiful world we live in! Its mountain scenery, its lakes and rivers, its glens with ferns and other wild plants, its meadows strewn over with flowers, to which the richest carpet is not to be compared, the fruits and flowers of the

garden in such endless variety—the whole vegetable world from the gigantic trees of the forest down to the tiny moss or lichen—the mineral world, with such untold treasures buried in the heart of the earth—the animal world, from the monsters of the deep and of the land, down to the almost invisible creatures that crowd in a drop of water, and man, the most wonderful of all—the heavenly bodies—sun and moon and stars—worlds upon worlds outside of our own—our Father made them all—they are all His handiwork.

When any great enterprise is finished now—a railway, or a canal, or a bridge, or a public building, or waterworks for a crowded city—how the event is celebrated and the commemorative tablet is erected, and other reminders of it abound! I suppose the finishing of the Forth Bridge, as a marvel of engineering skill, will be thus kept in remembrance. The almanac of future years will record 'The Forth Bridge finished'—on such a day.

And shall a finished creation have nothing specially to remind men of it? The Sabbath does so every week, and will continue to do so till the end of time. It says, 'God made the worlds—remember Him as the great and wise and good Creator of all things'.

Well may such a day be remembered and observed. We see with what earnestness and enthusiasm other memorial days are observed. I might refer to many instances. A few will suffice. On the 18th June, 1815, the great battle of Waterloo was fought, which decided the destinies of Europe. Success crowned the British arms under the Duke of Wellington, and peace was secured between Britain and France, which has never since been broken. How that 18th of June was kept in remembrance! how its return year after year was celebrated, till the number of surviving heroes at the Waterloo Banquet had become so small that it had to be given up!

On the 1st August, 1834, liberty to the slave was proclaimed throughout the whole British dominions. On the last night of July in that memorable year, a great assembly of slaves met in a church in one of our West Indian islands. At five minutes to twelve, Mr. Clarkson, who had done so much to bring about their emancipation, rose and exclaimed, 'The monster is dying!' The next five minutes were spent in silence and in prayer. When the clock struck twelve, the same voice exclaimed, 'The monster is dead!' The joy of the people was unbounded, for from that hour no man or woman could be a slave on British soil, or on board a British ship; and since then, the first day of August in each year has been observed as a holiday—has been regarded as the brightest day in all the year. Each time it comes round it is welcomed with a joy peculiarly its own. It commemorates the achievement of freedom.

On the 4th July, 1776, the United States of America asserted their independence and threw off the yoke of the mother-country. Since then, 'Independence Day,' as it is called, has been observed all over the American continent, and by American citi-

zens all over the world. I spent the 4th of July, 1874, in the city of Boston. It was a day of universal rejoicing. The people assembled in thousands in the public park. All the places of business were closed. Flags were flying from trees and windows. Little banners, with the stars and stripes, were fastened to the horses' heads, and were carried by boys in their jacket buttonholes. That is the great day in the American year.

And shall we not gladly commemorate our deliverance—our victory—our emancipation—the announcement that the sinner's salvation was complete, by the rising of Jesus from the dead? Shall we not remember this day on which our Redeemer arose? Shall we ever suffer ourselves to be deprived of a day that has such happy and hallowed associations? Surely the Sabbath should be a happy day—a day of gladness and rejoicing—as the memorial of the Resurrection of Jesus and of the completion of our redemption.

6. *It is a blessed emblem and foretaste of heaven.* It points back to the Paradise that was lost. It points forward to Paradise restored. It is the very name given to heaven. 'There remaineth a rest—a Sabbathism—the keeping of a Sabbath, unto the people of God.' We think and speak of heaven as the perfection of all that is good and bright and blessed. We delight to think of our dear ones who have died in the Lord, as having gone before us to the better land. We look forward to heaven as the glorious home of all Christ's redeemed ones. And every time the Sabbath comes round, it tells of all this.

7. *The keeping of it has God's blessing attached to it.* 'The Lord blessed the Sabbath day.' He set it apart above all the other days of the week as specially honourable, and He linked special blessing to it. God has honoured the Sabbath above all the other days of the week, and blessed temporally and spiritually those who have observed it. I have already quoted a passage from Isaiah, in which God gave this promise to those who kept His Sabbath, though despised among men, 'And the sons of the stranger who shall keep My Sabbath, even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer'. So in chapter LVIII 14: 'Thou shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it'.

What honour was put on the Sabbath in New Testament times! It was on the Sabbath that Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His Resurrection. It was on the Sabbath that he joined the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It was on the Sabbath that He repeated His visit. It was on the Sabbath that the Holy Ghost was poured out—on the day of Pentecost, converting thousands. It was on the Sabbath that Jesus revealed Himself to John on the isle of Patmos.

And then what honour has since then been done



to the Sabbath, and what a blessing has come to men in connection with it! What a birthday of souls it has been! How many have to count their age, as believers, from the Sabbath! Looking back from glory, the Sabbath will appear the brightest and best of all the days on earth. How many have to tell, from their own experience, what the fourth commandment says, 'The Lord blessed the Sabbath day'. There is no surer way of missing the blessing than by neglecting the Sabbath. There is no surer way of getting the blessing than by rightly observing it.

A friend told me lately of a most successful posting-master in a large English city. He was asked, 'To what, under God, do you most attribute your success?' and he at once replied, 'To having closed my gates on the Lord's day'. The friend to whom I have referred had advised him to do this at an early stage of his business career. It was very difficult to do. The first week it cost him the loss of one of his best customers. But God prospered and blessed him. The customer who had left him came back, after a few months, and brought another to him every way as good.

I met, not long since, a gentleman who, in early life, had been on a coffee plantation in Ceylon. He entered on this work at the age of three-and-twenty. He would not drink; he would not swear; he would not work on the Lord's day, and for a while had much to bear in consequence. But he persisted in doing what he thought right, and at length he carried the day. His workers brought in as many coffee-berries in six days as others did in seven. They were in better trim after the rest of the Sabbath than those who had worked right on; and while this young man, who was ready to make any effort or sacrifice that he might keep a good conscience, lived down opposition and prospered, others who wanted principle, or had not the courage of their convictions, went to utter ruin.

**II. The Manner of its Observance.**—A few words will suffice as to this.

1. *Resting from the employments and recreations of other days.* What a blessing the Sabbath is in bringing us *rest*—alike from work and from play! Sometimes the one is as hard as the other. There are some things which *must* be done on the Sabbath, and the doing of these is permitted or required. We are in the habit of calling these 'works of *necessity and mercy*'. But beyond that, God says, 'In it thou shalt not do any work'. We never would have had a Sabbath at all if God had not given it to us—not even a Sabbath of bodily rest. We may well take it as He gives it to us, and be thankful for it.

2. *Spending the day in God's worship and service.* The Sabbath has been given to us for this great purpose. No one will deny the duty and privilege of worshipping and serving God on all the other days of the week. But if we had not the special time and opportunity provided for us on the Sabbath, there would be danger of falling away from God's worship

altogether. The Sabbath is the great guard against this danger. The church, the family, the Sabbath school, the closet—all have their special place to fill on that day, as they could not on any other. The Psalmist in the eighty-fourth Psalm says, 'A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.' 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.'

And so as regards *service*. There is work for us to do, for God and for others. If we can do anything in our own home, that has the first claim on us. The poor, the sick, the sorrowful; the discouraged and solitary and friendless—we have these to help and care for. And the Sabbath is the special time for this.

How much you might do to help each other to keep the Sabbath—by example, by warning, by praying, by encouraging each other. I believe if the *children* would but take it up, and make it their business, with God's blessing, Sabbath-breaking might largely be put a stop to.

I wish it were the custom to '*begin the Sabbath on Saturday night*,' as it has been expressed, instead of carrying Saturday night, as is often done, into the Sabbath morning. Something might be done to improve matters in this respect. I have seen it mentioned that the Jews, after the time of the captivity, when they had learned to value their Sabbaths, were accustomed to light, at sunset of the day before, a candle, which was called the *Sabbath candle*, as indicative of the joy with which they welcomed the returning Sabbath; so that when the little ones saw the Sabbath candle lighted, it would be the signal for shouts of gladness. I wish we had our 'Sabbath candle' lighted on Saturday night—that Saturday night had more of the Sabbath about it!

Your earthly Sabbaths will soon be over. Seek to make the most of them. Let your Bible be more your companion. Seek to have more of the spirit of a young boy who, when told, on one of the last Sabbaths of his life, to stop reading, because the light was gone, left his little chair, which he had put close to the window, saying, 'The light of the fire will do, till I finish this nice chapter'.—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 185.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST BREAKING THE SABBATH

'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.'—EXODUS XX. 8. THESE words are part of one of the Ten Commandments which God gave to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. We may regard them as God's command to us to keep the Sabbath, or as His warning against breaking it. And so, our sermon to-day is about—'The Warning against Breaking the Sabbath'.

And I wish to speak of *three* reasons why we ought to mind this warning.

**I. In the first place, we ought to Mind it—**

<sup>1</sup> See *Preparation Day*, Nelson & Sons, and Sir Matthew Hale's *Letter to His Children*.

'for our Own Sakes'.—It is God's command to us to keep the Sabbath holy. And David tells us that 'in keeping His commandments there is great reward'. This brings the matter home personally to each one of us. In Isaiah LVI. 2, God says, 'Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it'. And in the fifth verse of this chapter, the Lord goes on to tell how He will bless those who keep the Sabbath. He says, 'Even unto them will I give in My house, and within My walls, a place and a name, better than of sons and daughters, and I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off'. This shows us how truly we should mind this warning for our own sakes. It will bring God's special blessing upon us, and that will do us more good than all the gold and silver in the world without it.

Sir Matthew Hale's experience about the Sabbath.—This good man was for many years a judge in England. He was one of the best and wisest judges that England ever had, and he was an eminent Christian.

And this is what he said, after forty years' experience and observation, about the Sabbath. 'I have noticed,' he said, 'that whenever I undertook any worldly business on the Lord's day, that business never prospered. Nay, I have noticed that if I even planned or thought about any temporal business on that day, it never prospered. So that I was always afraid even to think of any worldly business on the Sabbath.'

'Nay, more than this,' said Judge Hale, 'I have noticed that the more diligent and careful I was in attending properly to the duties and privileges of the Lord's day, the more happy and successful I was in my business during the following week; so that, from the way in which I kept the Sabbath, I could always tell how I might expect to prosper in the employments of the ensuing week.'

II. In the second place, we ought to Mind this Warning for 'the sake of our Country'.—One reason why God appointed the Sabbath among the Israelites, was that it might prove a blessing to them as a nation. And in the prophecy of Isaiah (ch. LVIII. 13, 14) we find Him giving a special promise, which shows how directly the prosperity of their country was made dependent on the proper observance of the Sabbath day. In this passage God is speaking to the Jews as a nation, when He says: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, nor doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' Here we are taught that keeping the Sabbath will promote the prosperity of our country.

And then there is another passage of Scripture, which shows us just as plainly that if we break the Sabbath we shall bring the curse of God upon our

country. When the Jews failed to keep the Sabbath, this was one of the chief causes on account of which they were led into captivity by the King of Babylon. After their return to Jerusalem, Nehemiah was sent by God to be their governor.

In talking to the princes of Judah one day, Nehemiah used these words: 'What evil thing is this that ye do, to profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath' (Neh. XIII. 17, 18).

It was true that the Jews keeping the Sabbath brought God's blessing upon their country, and made it prosper; but breaking the Sabbath interfered with their prosperity as a nation, and brought distress and trouble upon them.

III. The third Reason why we ought to Mind this Warning is—'for the Lord's Sake'.—The first time that we hear of the Sabbath being kept was after the creation of the world. And God Himself is the first person that we know of who ever kept the Sabbath. In the second chapter of Genesis we read: 'And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.'

God did not need rest after working for six days, as we do; yet He took the rest, and kept the Sabbath day, to set us an example about keeping this day holy. And here we have a good reason why we should mind this warning against breaking the Sabbath. God Himself has set us an example in this matter, and we should be careful to follow this example for the Lord's sake.

Let it be our earnest prayer that God may help us to keep the fourth commandment—for our own sake—for the sake of our country—and for His sake; and then we shall live happy and useful lives, and lives that will be to the honour of His holy name for ever.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 214.

#### COPYING OUR FATHER

'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: . . . But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.'—EXODUS XII. 9, and parts of 10, 11.

CHILDREN like to imitate parents. Father joiner; boy gets hold of saw and hammer—must do some carpentering. Mother cutting out dress; girl gets scissors—must cut out too. God, our Father, wants us to imitate Him.

#### 1. Let us Work as God Worked.—

##### 1. One thing at a time.

Never was such a tangle to put straight as that in Genesis I., 'Without form and void'. Yet God did it. How? First light, then firmament, then land, then grass, beasts, men.

How often we make mistakes through rushing at half a dozen things at once. Lessons, tidying up, tangles generally. Copy your Father. 'One at a time.'

So also in religion; try to conquer one fault at a time.

2. The right thing first, or everything in its proper place.

God did not make man before there was a place for him or food for him. Everything was in the *right* place. Beasts ready for man, and green herbs for beasts, and land for herbs, and light for all.

Copy your Father again. Often just the other way. 'Boy wants to be a man before he has been a boy. To write in copy-book before can write properly on slate, etc.

So also in religion. *First* our hearts—out of these are 'the *issues of life*'.

## II. Let us Rest as God Rested.—

'Why keep Sunday?' Best answer, 'Because our Father did, and He wants us to copy Him'. Question something like baby's, 'Why go to bed just yet?' need not give any other reason than that father wants him to.

But *other* children, to—wants them to copy Him as well. How selfish to buy things on Sunday. 'Ah, but I rested.' If you pushed another boy through a window, who would have to pay for the broken glass?

Remember, then, our Father's work and our Father's rest. Recapitulate. Let us try to copy Him. He will help us if we try. Pray, 'Lord, show us how to work now, so that afterwards we may rest with Thee for ever'.

In working up this address, help may be found from *Draper's Lessons on the Ecclesiastical Year*, No. XV., by which, in part, it was suggested.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 36.

'Honour thy father and thy mother.'—EXODUS XX, 12.

JAMES VAUGHAN gives two good illustrations of this text:—

There was a little girl whose name was Mabel. She went to pay a visit to her grandmother, and her grandmother was a very kind person; she lived in a very nice house, and had a very happy home. Mabel went to stay, then, with her grandmother. And when there, her grandmother went to see little Mabel in her bedroom, to see if she had got into bed all right, or wanted anything. She was surprised to find a tear on little Mabel's cheek; she had gone to sleep, but the tear was there! The next morning her grandmother said to her, 'Mabel, I am afraid you are a little home-sick'. 'Oh, no, dear grand-mamma,' she said, 'no one could be home-sick with such a kind person as you. You make me so happy. I am sure I am not home-sick.'

The next night the old grandmother went again to look at little Mabel in bed; and again she saw a tear on her cheek. She was very much surprised

again to find a tear. So she determined the next night she would sit in the next room, the dressing-room, and watch to see what was the matter. So the grandmother sat in the next room, after tucking up little Mabel in bed, putting under her a soft pillow, making her very comfortable, and giving her a nice tuck up to the chin, so that she seemed very happy. The grandmother then sat down to see what would happen. Soon she heard little Mabel sobbing. She was very restless; she put her pillow this way, and that way, and seemed very uncomfortable. Her grandmother went in to see her, and said, 'Mabel, what is the matter, I am sure you have got "a thorn in your pillow". What is it?' She understood at once what her grandmother meant, and said, 'Yes, grandmamma, I have'. 'Tell me, Mabel, what is "the thorn in your pillow"?' 'Oh! grandmamma, I have said to my dear mamma at home, I won't, I won't! And I cannot unsay it now. I have said it, and I cannot unsay it. That is "my thorn," what I have said to my dear mamma. And she is such a kind mother, she loves me so much; and to think that when at home I said to her, I won't! that is my thorn.' My dear children, take care you do not 'sow a thorn into your pillow'. Take care when your dear father and mother are dead and gone, that you have not 'a thorn in your pillow' about your conduct to them! regrets that you have said some things that you cannot now unsay. They are gone! How many a man and woman now living would 'give the world' to be able to unsay what they once said to father and mother!

The great Dr. Johnson was a very learned man; he wrote a *Dictionary*. He lived in Uttoxeter. His father was a bookseller, not in a very grand way, because he used to sell his books in the market-place. One day he asked his son Samuel (that was the Christian name of Dr. Johnson) to come down and help him in the sale of his books in the market-place. Little Samuel was rather a sort of a dandy, a conceited fellow! and he thought it beneath his dignity to sell books in the market-place. 'He demean himself to stand in the market-place to sell books, indeed, for his father! He was too great a gentleman for that!'

Fifty years passed away, and Dr. Johnson had become now an old man. It haunted him; he could not forget, though more than fifty years had passed, what he had done to his father in refusing to sell books in the market-place. He was very sad and unhappy about it. So, one day the doctor took off his hat, and went and stood in the same market-place, on the very spot where he said he would not stand to sell books for his father. And all the boys laughed at him; but there he stood with his bald head, not feeling the rain, or caring for the boys' laughter, that he might do a sort of *act of penance* to ease his conscience! He did not 'honour his father' when a boy, and he remembered it fifty years after, and it was a pain to him.

You have heard of that great man Sir Henry



Havelock, a great general, a great soldier, one of the greatest soldiers of his age. I will tell you what once happened to him. When a little boy he lived in or near London, I am not quite sure which. One morning his father took little Henry with him to London, and he was out all day, and when his father came back at night he said, 'Where's Henry?' His mother said, 'I don't know. I thought he was with you.' His father said, 'I thought he came home. Where can he be? He is missing, and I cannot find him.' Then his father thought for a time, and at last said, 'Oh, I remember. It is my fault. When I went away in the morning, I said to Henry, "Henry, at twelve o'clock I will meet you on London Bridge". He was to meet me there at that hour, and now it is late at night,' and Sir Henry Havelock's father said, 'I have no doubt he is still on London Bridge'. So off he set, in the night, many miles, and went to London Bridge, and there was little Henry. He had stood there from twelve o'clock in the day—all the time—because his father had said, 'Stay there till I come to meet you at London Bridge';—there he was till the middle of the night. I do not wonder he became a great general, a person so honoured; a boy so obedient to his father was the very one to rule when he came to be a man. Those who obey well will rule well. So he laid the foundation of his great life by 'honouring his father'.

I will tell you what that wonderfully good and great man Richard Hooker once said. He lived many years ago, and was one of the best men that ever lived. He wrote a book on *Ecclesiastical Polity*, another on *Justification by Faith*, and many more: they are very learned and very beautiful books. He said, 'If I had no other reason why I would wish to be religious, I would be religious to make my mother happy!'

#### THE WARNING AGAINST DISOBEYING OUR PARENTS

'Honour thy father and thy mother.'—EXODUS XX. 12.

THERE are *three* good things which minding this warning will bring to us. These should be our reasons for minding it.

**I. The First Good Thing which Minding this Warning will bring to us is—'Honour'.**—We have a good illustration of this in the case of Joseph, whose history is given in the Bible. When his father Jacob commanded him to leave their pleasant home in the vale of Hebron, and go and find out how his brethren were, he obeyed at once. They were journeying their flocks in Shechem. This was a long journey to take in those days. Joseph knew very well how his brethren hated him, because his father loved him more than he did them. On this account he must have known that his visit would not be a pleasant one to him. He was then about seventeen years of age. Now many a boy under these circumstances would not have been willing to obey his father. But it was different with Joseph. He had learnt to mind this

warning against disobeying his father. So he went straight forward, and did what his father had told him to do. This brought him into a great deal of trouble at first. His brethren treated him very unkindly. They stripped him of his robe of many colours. They cast him into a pit, and sold him as a slave to be taken down to Egypt. There he was kept in prison for several years. And yet, obeying his father about visiting his brethren was the best thing that Joseph ever did. It was *this* which led to his becoming the governor of all the land of Egypt. As Pharaoh sat upon his throne, Joseph stood the next to him in honour and greatness. He was one of the greatest men in the world at that time. But if he had not learned to obey his father, and to mind the warning we are now considering, he never would have gained this honour.

We have another illustration of this part of our subject in the history of one of our own countrymen—the great and good George Washington.

When he was a boy he had a great desire to go to sea. A friend of his, who was an officer in the navy, had obtained for him a midshipman's commission. His mother had at first given her consent to his taking this step. But afterwards she changed her mind, and was unwilling to have him go. Yet the preparation for his going went on. The trunk containing his clothes had been packed and taken on board the vessel. Then George went in to say 'good bye' to his mother. But as he threw his arms round her neck to give her the farewell kiss, she burst into tears, and said she could never have a moment's happiness while he was away from her. 'Then, mother dear, wipe away your tears, for I won't go,' were George's noble words. Then he had his trunk brought back from the ship, and gave up the idea of going to sea, although he had set his heart upon it. Thus he honoured his mother by obeying not her words only, but her wishes, and altering his whole plan of life to please her. And this became the turning-point in the life of Washington. This led to all his after greatness. If he had not learned this Bible warning against dishonouring his parents, his name would never have had the place it now occupies on the page of history, as the great and successful general of the American Revolution, and the first President of the United States. All this honour came to Washington as the result of his obedience to his parents.

**II. The Second Good Thing which Minding this Warning will bring to us is—'Pleasure'.** And for this we ought to mind it.—Solomon tells us that religion's ways are 'ways of pleasantness'. The ways in which religion leads us are the ways of keeping God's commandments. David tells us that 'in keeping these commandments there is great reward'. This 'great reward' refers not only to the joy and happiness which God's people will find laid up for them in heaven as the result of their having kept His commandments; but it also refers to the pleasure which keeping God's commandments will bring to them in this life. And there is not one of God's commandments

that will secure to us more pleasure than this we are now considering—the fifth commandment, about honouring and obeying our parents.

**III. The Third Good Thing which Minding this Warning will bring to us is 'Profit'.** And for this we ought to **Mind it**.—God says, 'Them that honour Me I will honour'.

And 'the honour which cometh from God' is the most profitable thing we can ever get. We honour God when we keep His commandments and mind the warning He gives us against disobeying our parents.

*The profit of obedience and kindness.*—Here is a story which refers to what happened to a family in Germany some years ago. The parents of this family were good Christian people, but they were very poor. They had ten children, who had been faithfully taught to honour and obey their parents, and to be kind to all who are in trouble. A poor widow woman, who was a neighbour of theirs, had just died, leaving a little daughter named Gretchen, with no money to support her, and no relatives in the world with whom she could live. One evening, about sunset, Gretchen came round to the door of the good German mother's house, and asked if she could have a home with them.

'I don't know how we can make out,' said the mother, 'and yet we cannot let you starve, poor child.'

Just then a stranger was passing by. He had heard the child's question to the mother, and her reply, and felt interested in the matter. He asked if he could have some supper with the family, and was invited in. He found out by inquiry all the particulars about little Gretchen, and then said, 'Can't you manage to keep her? I suppose you have none of your own?'

The mother smiled at this, and said, 'Oh, we have only ten, sir'.

Then the call was made for supper, and the little ones all came trooping in. The stranger watched them with great interest. Their faces were all clean; their hair neatly brushed, and their patched and worn clothes looked as though they had taken the greatest possible care of them. He was engaged in conversation with the parents of the family, and yet he kept a careful eye on the children. He was delighted to notice how instantly they minded every word that was spoken to them by their father or mother, and how ready they all were to share whatever they had with poor little Gretchen. 'Then he said, 'good-bye' to them, and went away.

The next day a soldier, in grand military dress, rode up on horseback, and called for the mother. When she opened the door he gave her a large letter, with the seal of the Emperor of Germany upon it. She trembled as she broke the seal, and opened the letter. And what do you suppose that the letter said? Why, it said that the man who had taken supper with them the night before was the Emperor, and that he was so pleased with the ten children, with the way in which they honoured and obeyed their

parents, and with their kindness to poor Gretchen, that he had decided to make each of them a present of \$100, which would be paid to them each year as long as they lived. Only think of that; \$1100 a year because the stranger who took supper with them was so pleased with their ready obedience to their parents, with their respect to him, and their unselfish kindness to the poor orphan Gretchen. Some of you may think that this sounds like a made-up story. But it is not so. It is a true story. The letter was signed—'Joseph, Emperor of Austria'. He was the stranger who had eaten a potato supper with that poor family the night before.

And this is a beautiful illustration of the profit that comes from minding the Bible warning against disobeying our parents.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 309.

'Thou shalt not kill.'—EXODUS XX. 13.

IN France, a long time ago, there was a remarkable picture placed in the church of Notre Dame. It is an *alto-rilievo* on the wall. And this is the history of it. A long time ago there was a nobleman going through a wood, called the Wood of Coudé, a wood in France, accompanied by a fine dog, an English bloodhound. While going along a man attacked him, robbed and murdered him, and afterwards buried him under a tree. The dog stayed by the grave some days, and then he went off to the place where his master had lived; and he took hold (by his teeth) of the trousers of a man, and drew him along. The man could not understand him, but at last he saw the dog had something on his mind, so he followed him, and he took him to the spot where his master was murdered, and there the body was found, buried under the tree. They took the body away, and buried it properly, and then this dog went back to the family of the nobleman; but whenever he met in the street (which he often did) a certain other nobleman, this dog always growled at him; he flew at him once, and seized him by the throat! People began to think it was very strange. They inquired into the nobleman's history, and found he had been a great rival, and very jealous of the other nobleman who had been murdered. Putting it all together, they thought it looked very suspicious! So some one told the king—Louis VIII. of France. He thought it strange, and sent for the dog. There were twenty noblemen present, standing before the king, and as the dog entered, he immediately recognised the nobleman he had so frequently attacked, and immediately he ran at him, just as the king had expected. He was therefore convinced there was something behind the scenes. He ordered that to be done which was the custom in those days, viz. that the thing should be settled by a battle. They must fight it out; just as this man would have had to fight another man, so he would have now to fight the dog. On the spot where Notre Dame stands, in the middle of the island, there the nobleman and the dog had to fight. The man was allowed to have a great cudgel, and the dog an

empty cask, to run into when tired. They had a great fight; and the dog ran round and round, and every now and then ran into his cask for refuge to avoid the cudgel. At last the dog seized hold of the man by the throat, pulled him to the ground, and stood over him. The nobleman then confessed he had committed the murder! He was afterwards executed for it. And now, in Notre Dame, this picture remains as a record of the event. It shows how God finds out a murder!—JAMES VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (4th Series), p. 214.

### MINE AND THINE; OR, STEALING

'Thou shalt not steal.'—EXODUS XX. 15.

THIS is a short command, and should be learned by heart by every boy and girl. Indeed, they ought to learn all the Ten Commandments by heart, that they may obey them.

The text teaches you to regard the rights of others in property, in things owned. It marks the difference between mine and thine. Each one can say of some things, 'These are mine'; but of others he must say, 'Those are not mine'. You can, and do say sometimes, 'This is mine and not yours; but that is yours and not mine'. You have clothes, and shoes, and books, and dolls, and playthings which you call your own, though your father or mother bought or made them for you. They are yours, and not your sister's or your brother's, and you know it. But your brother or sister has other things which he or she owns, and you do not. This you understand. You know your own hats or caps, your shoes, your dresses, your playthings. They are your property. You have a first right to them. No one but your parents has a right to take them away from you.

Now the text refers to this right of property, and says, 'Thou shalt not steal'. Did you ever think that these words apply to you, children? Yet they do; for in your plays you may learn to steal or learn not to steal. Do you ask me, 'How so?' I will tell you. As you deal with your brother or sister, so will you deal with others, even when you grow up to be men and women. It is because of this that I speak to you about stealing. Your teacher gives you a book. It is yours. You own it. But your brother wants it, and so he goes and gets it, and hides it. He steals it. He is learning to steal. Had he any right to your book? None at all. Have you, then, any right to take and use anything that belongs to your sister or brother without the consent of the one who owns it? No; you can use your own as you please, if you do not injure them; but you should not think of taking and using another's things without consent. If you want to see or use them, ask for them in a kind way. Do not snatch them, nor say, 'Give them to me!' You should say, instead, 'Please, may I take them?'

Of course each one in a family ought to love the rest so that he will be glad to have them take, examine, and use his playthings, and not be selfish about it; but there ought to be in every home

among the children a difference between mine and thine, what one child owns or claims as his, and what another owns or claims as his, and this difference or distinction should be enforced by parents. One child should be made to treat the rights of another with respect. For, if a boy be allowed to eat what belongs to his brother or sister, and to use their things as though they were his own, he will be likely to do the same to other boys, and, because he was not trained better, may grow up a thief. But if a boy or girl treats a brother's or sister's things as he or she should, not taking and using them without leave, neither will grow up a thief. They will not steal even a pin. The first way, then, to obey the text is, not to steal from brothers and sisters, from father or mother, or from playmates. And I hope your parents will see to it that you do not take without leave anything which does not belong to you.

The next way to obey the text is to treat the property of others as you do the playthings of others. You should never pick fruit from trees growing on your father's place without his permission; but to rob fruit trees which your father does not own, what shall I say of it? It is stealing. It is breaking the command, 'Thou shalt not steal,' which God himself gave. The fruit is not yours. You have no right to take it. You sin against God by taking it. Never touch what does not belong to you. If you do rob the trees or the vines, you are a thief.

Do you say that you took only a little? Yet stealing a little is stealing. Stealing a cent is as truly stealing as the stealing of a dollar. To steal a cent's worth of fruit or a dollar's worth is as wicked as to steal a cent or a dollar from a man's pocket. If you grow up robbing vines and trees and orchards, where will you stop? Who would have you in their store or office or shop or farm? Who would trust you in anything? A child who does not mind the difference between mine and thine, what is his and what is not his, in little things, will not be likely to mind it in great things. He grows up to take all he can get from others without punishment, and it is but a little step to a life of stealing and robbery. Do not begin to take that sad step.

Do you say that you like strawberries, grapes, pears, peaches, and apples? But that is no reason why you should steal them. If anybody could steal whatever he liked, no one could own anything that another wanted. If you think it right to steal because you like it, then another could for the same reason steal your best doll or your cap or anything else you have. No, there is only one law of God, and that is the text, 'Thou shalt not steal'. Obey that, and you are safe; but if you begin to break that law by stealing sugar or fruit or candy or anything else, you may become a thief of larger things, and be sent to prison for it.

Let me repeat:—

1. Do not steal from your parents, sugar, cake, fruit, money, or anything else.

2. Do not steal from your brothers or sisters, their books, playthings, or anything else.



3. Do not steal from your playmates, marbles, pencils, or anything else you may want.

4. Do not steal from your neighbours, fruit, melons, eggs, or anything else.

5. Do not steal from anybody anything whatever; for God says, 'Thou shalt not steal'.

While you are thinking of these five things, let me say a word to parents, and ask them to train you carefully to know and to respect the difference between mine and thine, what is your own and what is not your own. Children learn it very young and will stand up for their own, will quarrel and fight for it. Hence parents can use these times to teach one of the most important lessons of life, namely, the distinction between mine and thine. The neglect of this distinction and training may ruin your dear children. Enforce it rigidly.—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons for Children*, p. 223.

### LITTLE THINGS

'By little and little.'—EXODUS XXIII. 30.

In nature a noxious weed may be the means of protecting a useful plant from the sun and storm, till it is strong enough to do battle with the elements itself. And this was the kind of service which the old Canaanites did for the Israelites who invaded and conquered their country. These people were guilty of many dark vices, and they had polluted the land with their foul idolatries; and if the Israelites allowed them to dwell among them, they would have corrupted their good manners, and in a short time would have made the chosen people as bad as themselves. But, bad as they were, God would not have them removed wholesale at once. For in that case the land would have been made a wilderness, the wild beasts would have multiplied, and the Israelites would have been too few to cope with them. By little and little the Canaanites were to be driven out; and in this way the wild beasts would be kept in check, till the new inhabitants had increased to such an extent that they would need no help to prevent their ravages.

It is by little and little that an evil character is formed. Great sinners are not made such at once. Their guilt is made up of many little sins. When you want to light a fire in the grate, you do not put into it a great lump of coal or log of wood, and apply a match in the hope that it will burn. Your match will go out and your great lump of fuel will not kindle. You have to prepare the way by putting first into the grate a quantity of paper and small dry sticks or wood-shavings or some other inflammable material; and these catch fire at once, and by the heat and flames they produce they gradually set the solid coal or wood ablaze. And is that not the way in which great sins have the way prepared for them by a number of little sins? Gehazi would not have cheated in the matter of the presents of Naaman, the Syrian leper, if he had not cherished the spirit of covetousness previously in the service of Elisha. And Judas would not have betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, if he had not before that been in the

habit of pilfering from the bag containing the common money of the disciples, which he kept. You know how the wonderful bridge across Niagara River, below the great waterfall, was made. The engineer first sent over the terrible abyss to the opposite side a child's kite having a silken thread attached to it. To this silken thread a thin cord was tied, and to the thin cord a thicker cord, which carried over a rope, and then a great cable, and then granite piers were built supporting huge iron chains on which to lay planks for a roadway. And to-day the immense traffic of two great nations pass fearlessly over the great gulf that at one time seemed to place an insuperable obstacle in the way. And that is precisely the method in which the sinner makes a way to span the abyss of evil: first the thin silken thread of desire flies over, and then stronger desires and passions, and at last by little and little he who would at first have shrunk back from the least appearance of evil dashes boldly across the gulf of ruin in his mad career. If there be no outward sin, a single day seems to work but little mischief in the character. You do not usually feel worse to-day than you did yesterday. There is nothing in yourself or in your circumstances to show how far you have drifted from the right direction; and you have gone on in sin and confirmed and strengthened your evil inclinations.

II. Sin is cumulative, that is, grows and collects in a heap. The effect of each sin does not pass away when it is committed. It remains and influences the character for evil, weakens the moral fibre of the nature, so that you find it easier to commit another sin. There are some poisons that pass out of the system at once, so that if you took a small quantity of them by degrees you would not suffer any harm. But there are other poisons that abide in the system, so that if you took a number of very small doses in succession, those minute doses would accumulate in your body, and form in the end a dose sufficiently deadly to kill you. Prussic acid is one of the cumulative poisons. It gives the bitter flavour to laurel and bay leaves, and to the kernel in the inside of cherry and prune stones, of which young people are so fond. A little girl in Paris one day ate a large number of peach kernels. Each of them contained a very small quantity of prussic acid; and by a cumulative process the large number which she ate produced in the end a sufficient dose of the poison to prove fatal. She died with all the symptoms of death by prussic acid. And so sins, in themselves small and insignificant, may little by little so accumulate as to create a habit, which will have the most injurious effect upon the moral constitution, and lead in the end to fatal results. Lord Kelvin once remarked, while speaking of the far-reaching influence of strains or vibrations, 'I lay this little piece of chalk upon a granite mountain and it strains the whole earth'. And so a little act of yours strains the whole moral world, makes it different from what it would have been without it.

III. I have thus shown you that great consequences

may come from what you call little things. Your heart and life are what Canaan was when the Israelites entered into it. It is full of wild beasts, of lusts and evil thoughts and desires. And you must drive them out by little and little as God's sanctifying grace works in you. You must fight them again and again and make them feel the strong hand of power. You must not make terms with them, for the more you indulge them the more they will trouble you. But if you will overcome them in God's strength and name, they will become weaker as you become stronger, and the final victory will be with you. You must not allow your Christian character to be spoiled by little sins, or what are called such, but watch against them, and keep your conscience tender and wakeful, so that you may perceive those sins to be indeed sins. Seek to have your hearts filled with love to Jesus, that you may realise by contrast with His holiness the evil that there is in your own sin. Do not allow little sins in your conduct and conversation, in your temper and disposition, to settle down and become part of your character and destroy its purity and beauty, as the particles of dust in a room settle down and become engrained in a carpet that is never swept, and so by the friction of frequent footsteps loses both its pattern and texture. What you want is a sensibility to sin like that which the eye has towards a speck of dust, which produces a tear that washes it away at once.

IV. In conclusion, let me ask you to be constantly doing little things for the Master, and He will value them at their due worth. It is upon the doing of little things that the judgment of the last day hangs—upon giving a cup of water to a disciple, upon feeding the poor, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the prisoner. It is by little things that we show our love. Strangers must give valuable presents if they are to be accepted, but a child of the house can give a little wild flower. There is a very beautiful legend connected with the mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople. It was once a Christian church and it has stood for fourteen centuries. It was built by the Roman Emperor Justinian, who was a Christian, and cost more than twenty millions of pounds, and took ten thousand workmen for more than twenty years to finish it. It was the greatest building in the world; and on a marble stone above the lofty entrance door the Emperor caused the architect to carve the words, 'Justinian gives this house to God'. On the day of the opening of the church the Emperor looked up in the pride of his heart to see this inscription, and to his astonishment and indignation he found instead the words, 'The widow Euphrasia gives this to God.' Who dared commit this sacrilege? No one knew. At last the widow Euphrasia was found in the person of a poor aged woman living at the foot of the hill on which the church was built; and when brought trembling into the presence of the monarch and accused of changing his inscription, she replied, 'Sire, I only threw a little straw which I plucked from the mattress on which I lay before the

oxen that dragged up the stones to the building'. The Emperor said, 'Thy gift was small, but the great King who lived and died humble has accepted thy gift, for it was the gift of love; but He has rejected mine, for it was the gift of pride. God grant, my poor friend, that when we meet hereafter at the Throne, I may attain to a footstool at thy feet.' It is a lovely story and has a lovely moral. God's valuation is not according to the great mountain of rock, but according to the little jewel into which it crystallises. It is the little thing that contains much love that sparkles as a gem of untold value in His eyes. The two mites of the widow that make but one farthing are more precious to Him than all the golden gifts of the rich cast into the treasury.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 179.

### THE TABERNACLE COLOURS

'Blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.'—EXODUS XXV. 4.

For forty years the children of Israel lived in tents, pitched now here and now there in the Arabian desert. And Jehovah their God, Who had brought them out of Egypt, dwelt in a Tent too, in the midst of them. That holy Tabernacle was formed after the pattern which the Lord had beforehand showed to Moses when he was with Him on Mount Sinai. And it lasted for nearly five hundred years. The people got houses to live in as soon as they were settled in the Promised Land; but God's Tent remained until the building of the Temple by King Solomon.

The Tabernacle which Moses set up was very *strong*. Sometimes it is spoken of as 'the frail tabernacle'; but it was not frail at all. It could scarcely have been more substantial than it was. The materials of it were very *costly*. The metal which it contained has been valued at £230,000, and the curtains and precious stones at £20,000. The total value was therefore £250,000, or a quarter of a million of our money. And the Tabernacle was very *beautiful*. The tents in which the people lived were ordinary and commonplace; but the Sanctuary in the midst of them was resplendent with its scarlet roof, its golden furniture, and its gay-coloured curtains.

Moses devotes only one chapter, or at most two, to the creation of the world; but his narrative of the erection of the Tabernacle, and the consecration of the priests who were to minister in it, spreads itself over twelve or thirteen chapters. Evidently, therefore, the Tabernacle occupies an important place in the story of redemption.

We shall shortly consider two things in reference to the Tabernacle colours:—

I. **What They Were.**—The words of our text tell us—words that occur frequently in the chapters which describe the building of the Tabernacle: 'Blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen'.

These were the colours, first of all, of the ten great curtains of which the sacred Tent was made by 'the wise-hearted men' among the people. They were the colours next of the great veil which divided the Holy Place from the Holiest of all. They were the

colours also of the first veil, or entrance curtain of the Tabernacle. And they were the colours of the hanging for the gate of the court open to the sky, which enclosed the sacred Tent, and within which the congregation assembled for worship. The hangings for the court itself were white—of fine twined linen.

The same famous Tabernacle colours were seen also in the robes of the priests. The ordinary priests, the sons of Aaron, were clad in white: they wore coats, and bonnets, and breeches of fine linen. But Aaron, the High Priest, wore all the colours on his resplendent apparel. The mantle, or 'robe of the ephod,' which reached down to his feet, was 'all of blue'; and upon the hem of it were pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet. The ephod, or short upper sleeveless coat—the curious girdle of the ephod—and the breastplate of judgment, were all made 'of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work'. The High Priest's robes were called 'holy garments,' because they were worn only in the service of the Sanctuary; and it was necessary that they should have upon them the sacred colours.

**II. Their Meaning.**—Why were these colours chosen as the livery of the Tabernacle? Was it because they were both beautiful and costly? Was it because they are the royal colours, and therefore the most fit for the adornment of the abode of the King of kings? Certainly, the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the white were in their proper places on the curtains of the sacred Tent, and on the robes of Aaron its minister, because of the natural symbolism which we associate with these colours.

*Blue* is the colour of the sky: it means *Peace*. When Moses and Aaron and the elders ascended Mount Sinai, 'they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in His clearness'. Sapphire is a beautiful blue; and the clear deep blue of the firmament leads us to think of 'peace with God'. Blue is true; and God's peace is the most real and precious of blessings.

*Purple* is the royal and imperial colour. It suggests first the thought of sovereignty, and then that of *Grace*. For grace is the most attractive and beautiful form in which it is possible for sovereignty to manifest itself. A king apparels himself in a purple robe; and purple therefore suggests the thought of the undeserved favour of God towards us sinners.

*Scarlet* is the blood-colour. It speaks to us of sacrifice by blood-shedding, of the remission of sins through the merit of the great atonement, and thus of the Divine *Mercy*. Red means both sin and love; and every scarlet thread in the Tabernacle needle-work may well prompt the doxology: 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever'.

*White* consists of the union of the seven prismatic colours. In the Tabernacle it was the background

of all. It was the ground on which the lovely hues were wrought. White is right: it is the colour of *Holiness* and purity. To the Bride of the Lamb 'was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints'.

'Blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.' That is, 'Grace, mercy, and peace' from God to His people; and purity in heart and life their response to Him.

Seen on the curtains and veils of the Tabernacle, these colours said to the worshipper drawing near, 'Grace, mercy, and peace to you from Him whose Tent this is'. And seen on the High Priest's dress, they said, 'Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, of whose Body the Tabernacle is a picture-symbol'.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 272.

### THE CENSUS

'When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.'—EXODUS XXX. 12.

You all know what is meant by 'the census,' and I dare say you have been very much interested about it. One night all the people in the United Kingdom were counted. You saw the large sheets of paper with lines ruled to make several columns, which were left at every house, and you all helped to fill up the columns. First, father entered his name as the head of the house; then came mother, then the older brothers and sisters, then your name, then baby's name, if there was one; and visitors, and servants, and whoever slept that night in the house.

Our text tells us that the Jews were commanded to take a census, but their census differed in various respects from the one taken every ten years of ourselves.

**I. Every Man must give a Ransom for his Soul.**—'They shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary' (ver. 13). Half a shekel would be not quite one shilling and threepence in our money. This sum every man was obliged to pay, 'that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them'. In our census there was nothing to pay. Some ignorant people fancied there was, and had to be assured that this was not the case. But if anyone wilfully filled up the census paper falsely, he was liable to a fine of five pounds.

Then in the Jewish census children were not included. 'Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord.' In our census all the children are included, even the very youngest. Children are very important members of every family amongst us, and I trust they will all be included in the family of God. Jesus said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not:



for of such is the kingdom of God'. No children included in the Jewish census! and half a shekel ransom money for all who were numbered! What a difference between that census and our own!

**II. Every Man, Rich and Poor, must Give the same Ransom.**—'The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls' (ver. 15). What does that mean? Why were all to give an equal sum? Was it not to teach the great truth that all souls are equal in the sight of God, and that those who are rich should never despise the poor? Money is a very good thing for those who know how to make a good use of it, but never a thing to be proud of. A boy who is proud because he has more pocket-money than his schoolfellows, or because his parents are richer than their parents, only shows how foolish he is. It is far better to have a well-filled mind, and a noble character, than a well-filled purse. Some poor men in the sight of God are very, very rich, and some rich men are very, very poor.

**III. A Ransom has been Paid for every One of us by the Lord Jesus Christ.**—Not one of us could make an atonement for his own soul. No money that the richest could pay, no good work that the best could do, would ever atone for his sins; but we are 'redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ' (1 Pet. i. 18, 19, R.V.).

Look in your maps, and find the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. Malta is full of Roman Catholics, and I have read that on certain days priests go about the streets with a money-box and a bell, ringing the bell, rattling the coins in the money-box, and crying with a loud voice, 'What will you give for the souls? what will you give for the souls?' The money is put into the boxes to pay the priests for 'saying masses,' as it is called, and offering prayers for the souls of the dead that they may be delivered from punishment.

On the outside wall of one of the churches in the city of Antwerp I have seen a very curious thing, a model of a prison cell built against the outside wall of the church like a cage, with iron bars in front. Inside the cage are figures of men as large as life, like what you see in a waxwork. They look very miserable, and are stretching their hands between the prison bars, and pointing to a money-box outside as if they were appealing to you to take pity on them, and to put money into the box to pay the priests to pray for them, and to deliver them thus from their prison. Does not all that seem to you very foolish? How thankful we should be that the Lord Jesus our great High Priest 'ever liveth to make intercession' for us, and that *HE* has paid the ransom price, for boys and girls as well as men and women, in His own most precious blood. May we all of us be numbered with His people in the last great census, and be found amongst the 'great multitude which no man

can number,' who 'have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb'.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 83.

### COMFORT FOR TIMID CHILDREN

'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'—  
EXODUS XXXIII. 14.

It is a good thing for boys and girls to be brave, but sometimes you feel timid and frightened. Some children are afraid to be left alone in the dark, but if you will sit with them till they go to sleep they are quite happy. Little boys are sometimes teased at school. It is very cruel and wicked to tease and bully one another, but it is sometimes done. But if a little boy has a big brother at school to take care of him and fight his battles, he is not afraid. The presence of his big brother gives him rest. A story is told of Lady Augusta Stanley, the noble wife of Dean Stanley of Westminster. She used to visit the poor sick people in the Westminster Hospital, and to read the Bible to them and comfort them. One day a poor woman, who had a painful operation to suffer, sent for Lady Augusta to come and sit beside her. 'For I can bear it better,' she said, 'if you are with me;' and her kind friend's presence gave her rest.

In our beautiful text, the great God in heaven says to little boys and girls, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest'. As He went with the children of Israel 'by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light': so He will go with us.

But there is no pillar of cloud and of fire for us: we cannot see God at all. How do we know that His presence is with us? Can a little child see his mother when his eyes are shut and the room is dark? No; but he goes to sleep quite happy if he *believes* that she is there. Can you see the air which fills the room at this moment? No; but the room is full of air, or else you could not live: and the presence of our dear kind Heavenly Father round about us is as real as the presence of the air that we breathe; and to believe this will give us rest and peace.

Now, let me try to show you how this will come true. Years ago, long before any of you were born, there was a little boy who was to go a long railroad journey from London to Bristol. In prospect of this he was rather timid. You wonder at this because you never feel timid on the railroad. But you must remember that railroads were new things at that time. They had not been long invented. He had never seen a railroad; and he had heard about terrible railway accidents, and long, dark railway tunnels; and he was afraid at the thought of his first railway journey, just as you might feel afraid at the thought of going in a balloon for the first time. Well, this little boy had a kind aunt, and before he got into the train she put into his hand an envelope, on the outside of which was written, 'Prescription against fear'. You know what a prescription is? It is the

paper which doctors write, telling the druggist what medicine to send for people who are sick. When the train was going very fast, and was getting near the long tunnel, and the little boy was beginning to feel fearful, he opened the envelope, and what do you think he found inside? He found this text of Scripture, written in large letters: 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee'; and that told him that the best cure for fear is to think of God and His presence. Wherever we go, God is always there to take care of those who put their trust in Him.

But 'no man hath seen God at any time,' and we cannot form a picture of Him in the mind's eye. Quite true: but we can easily form a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ when we read the beautiful stories given of Him in the Gospels. We read how He stilled the storm and said to the frightened disciples, 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' and His presence will be with us in our storms, as it was with them in theirs, for He says, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'. Let us all believe in Him and in His presence, and that will give us comfort and rest.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 6.

### MOUNTAIN CLIMBING

EXODUS XXXIV. 2.

MOSES on this occasion was bidden to climb Mount Sinai, and reach the summit to receive the Law from God, so that he might give it to the people at the foot. He could not become a lawgiver except on two conditions: first, that he should get up early and be ready in the morning; and second, that he should climb the mountain until he reached the very summit. Now, there is very little done in life except on these conditions. A man must begin early and climb patiently, if he would do anything noble here.

We will therefore talk a little about mountain climbing, and apply it to our everyday life.

1. The best time to climb is *early in the morning*, before the heat of the sun is powerful. How true this is of life! The best time to do difficult tasks, and thus climb patiently toward some position of usefulness and honour which we long to occupy, is very early in life. Those who have lived noble lives have as a rule striven when very young.

2. Climbers as a rule *start in high spirits*. They run on, and jump over every brook and boulder, and it would appear from their rapid progress that they would soon reach the summit; but as they proceed they learn to reserve their strength, and thus use it more wisely, as it will be all required before they have finished their task. How often have we seen this in life! Little boys and girls begin life with great enthusiasm. They rush at everything, and spend a great deal of energy unnecessarily, but by and by they learn to make the best use of the strength they have, as they will have none to spare after they have done all their duty.

3. Climbers are also apt at first to *take short cuts*. They do not see why they should take the winding

or the zigzag path. But they have only to do this a few times to learn that those who made the path knew the way far better than they do, for by taking a short cut they have only got into difficulties and dangers, such as bogs and precipices. So in life, at first we are inclined to make a way for ourselves, and not to follow in the old paths which others have trodden before us, but sooner or later we learn that our own conceit and waywardness have only resulted in trouble, and we look with greater deference to the example of others who have walked the path of life before us. We get less impatient and more teachable as we go on.

4. Even when climbers follow the right way, they have, at times, to *pass dangerous spots*, where the path narrows near a steep precipice over which some one, perhaps, has at some time or other fallen. On such spots there is often a board fixed bearing words like these: 'Dangerous! a man has fallen over this precipice'. Then we have to take warning, and keep as far away as possible from the danger. How often this is the case in life! There are so many dangers—sins and habits—against which we are warned. God has in His Word graciously given us many such warnings. Blessed are those who take warning, and keep as far as possible from the sin which has made others so grievously to fall!

5. Some climbers have to *carry heavy burdens*, while others have not only their burdens carried for them, but *are carried themselves*. So in life. Some are born in such circumstances of poverty and trial that their path is a very steep one, and they have many burdens to carry. Others are born in such circumstances of wealth and ease, that they and their burdens are carried most of the way. But how much more noble it is to climb and do our duty well than to be only a burden to others! How much sweeter will be the joy on the summit for all the difficulties which we have patiently overcome on the way.

6. The climbers have occasionally to *pass through cloud and mist* on the way upward, but if they persevere they pass through the cloud *into the clear sunshine above*, and then how beautiful the very clouds will be when beneath our feet! Yea, sometimes we see the lightning flash and hear the thunder roar, but we are above all, and can smile at the storm and the darkness. So if you live long enough you will find that you have to pass through storm and darkness, but if you have the grace to persevere, and trust in your God, you will at last be led through the darkness into light, through trouble into joy.

7. Climbers, too, have *many disappointments* on the way. They ask others how far it is before they reach the summit, and they get many conflicting answers, so that they scarcely know what to expect. Then again they see a lofty crag with a pole stuck on the top of it, and they say, 'There, if we can reach that we shall have gained the summit'. They reach it, and then find that there are other heights towering far above them which have yet to be climbed. How often this is the case in life! Frequently we

think that we have only to go so much farther, or to reach such and such a height, and then all will be done, but we find that we were greatly misled by many to whom we listened, and that the height which we thought was the highest only enabled us to see better how far we had yet to go. Yet we are not sorry, for even our mistaken hopes for a time have helped us to go on. It is well that God has not shown us all the future at the start of life.

8. Many difficulties and dangers will be avoided, and success will be assured, if we have a *safe and experienced guide*. There are some mountains which cannot be ascended safely except with a guide. Our life is a mountain of that kind. We cannot reach the goal unless we have Jesus for a guide. He has given us an example that we should follow His steps. May we all follow Him very closely, and we shall pass safely through every danger and every cloud, and at last stand upon the summit where the light of God for ever rests, and from which we shall review with gratitude all the winding paths of life, and all the difficulties and dangers through which we have passed. —DAVID DAVIES, *Talks to Men, Women, and Children*, p. 201.

#### THE BEAUTY OF GOODNESS

‘Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.’ —EXODUS XXXIV. 29.

THERE was once a great artist in Italy, whose name, Michael Angelo, some of you may have heard. He was one of the greatest painters and sculptors who have ever lived, and he spent his life trying to fashion the most noble and beautiful faces and forms that could be made. He made hundreds of them, both on canvas and in marble and bronze; but at last he succeeded in making one which was incomparable. I have never seen it, though I have seen many casts and engravings and photographs of it; but I hope some day to go to Rome and see it, and so doubtless will some of you.

Now, this noblest image of manly beauty which the art of man has ever produced is the same face as our text speaks about. It is Moses, when he was coming down from Mount Sinai, after being forty days and forty nights alone with God, and when his face shone with a Divine light, although he wist not that this heavenly beauty was there.

I dare say beauty is something which you all covet. You would like to be called beautiful; perhaps there is nothing else you would like so much. Well, let us see what we can learn about it from this description of Moses. ‘He wist not that his face shone while he talked with him.’ There are three things we can learn from these words: (1) True beauty is from within; (2) It does not know itself; (3) It does good to others unawares.

1. **It Comes from Within.**—There is an old Scotch saying you may have heard, that ‘beauty is only skin-deep’. This is partly true, but partly it is quite untrue. There is a kind of beauty which is merely skin-deep; it consists in delicacy of complexion, and

the soft, well-proportioned features of the face. Many children have it, and it is very charming as long as it lasts. But it does not generally last long; it is the prey of every accident and disease; and the wind and weather of years rub it all off.

But there is a kind of beauty which is not merely skin-deep and does not pass away. It comes from within, and instead of fading, only increases as years pass by. It comes from the mind and the heart. You know the face is a mirror of what is in the mind and the heart. If you sit for a long time watching a face you are well acquainted with, you can almost tell what is going on in the mind within. You see it reflected in the eyes and the movements of the features. If a person is melancholy and sunk in deep sorrow, the light forsakes the eyes, and a dark cloud seems to rest on the whole features. On the other hand, if the heart within is blithe and merry, the eyes sparkle, and sunshine spreads over the brow and cheeks.

If, therefore, the state of the heart and of the mind be permanently melancholy, the face will take a melancholy cast; if it be low and mean, the features will become sordid and repulsive; but if it be happy and elevated, a bright, noble expression will settle on the face. I remember once alighting at a London railway station and finding myself in the midst of a huge, pushing, surging crowd of the rascality of the East End, who were trying to get into a train which was to carry them to some suburban races. The air was resounding with oaths, and heavy with the fumes of drink. But oh, the faces! They still haunt me; the devil’s mark stamped deep on them. What histories of vice they exhibited! The sins within had risen up and stood looking out of window through the ugliness and repulsiveness of their features. On the contrary, where there is a self-forgetting heart within, rejoicing in doing good to others, the good feeling streams up into the face. Some people thus carry sunshine wherever they go. This is the beauty which comes from within.

But nothing can make the heart so happy and keep it so happy as the love of Christ; and nothing can make the mind so noble as communion with God. It was from this that the noble beauty sprang which shone in the face of Moses. He had been up forty days and forty nights in Mount Sinai. What was he doing there? He was talking with God; he was brooding on God’s love; his mind was filled with great, new thoughts of God. This it was which made his face to shine. It was this, too, which made the face of the martyr Stephen shine when they were about to stone him: his heart was full of the love of Christ; he cried out, ‘I see heaven open, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God’. The Bible says Stephen’s face had the beauty of an angel’s. What is it that makes the angels beautiful? It is that they see God; their hearts are filled with His love and their minds with high thoughts of Him. And this will be the source of the beauty in the glorified bodies of the saints. It will come



from within, the radiant soul making the body radiant.

**II. It Does not Know Itself.**—People who are beautiful sometimes set their beauty off with ornaments. For instance, a simple blue or pink ribbon clasping the head will sometimes set off a fine brow; or a rose stuck in the hair will set off the whole figure; or a jewel of some kind appropriately placed can do it. People who have no taste do not know the use of ornaments; they stick them on anywhere, merely to show that they possess them, or to exhibit their wealth. But persons of taste never put on an ornament except to bring out some point of beauty.

Now there is an ornament which more than any other sets off the true beauty of which I have been speaking—the beauty which comes from within. It is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit—the ornament of humility.

Moses wist not that his face shone. He had been so absorbed in gazing at the glory of God up in the mountain, and, as he came down the hill, he was still so absorbed in the exalted thoughts with which his mind was filled, that he had not a thought to spare for himself, and never knew that he was different from other men. Indeed, I believe that if he had been thinking about himself, if he had been anxious to know whether any change was taking place in his countenance, if he had been considering how noble and beautiful he was becoming, and how deep an impression he would make upon others, his countenance would never have shone at all.

It spoils all when we know about our own excellences. If a boy is very clever and brilliant, you know how it spoils people's admiration for him, if, after speaking of his cleverness, they have to add, 'Yes, but he knows it'. Those who have the kind of beauty I have spoken of as skin-deep very often know about it, and this spoils it altogether; for a face cannot be truly beautiful, however symmetrical its features or

however fine its complexion may be, if the stamp of self-conceit is on it. But the goodness which comes from within does not know about itself: it has no time for such thoughts; if they were to prevail, it would be lost.

But how are we to get this beauty without knowing about it? How can we strive after it unless we think about it? It is got by thinking about other things. Moses got it by gazing on the glory of God, by thinking of His love and His wisdom and His majesty. So it is by being often in the mount with God that you will get it; that is, by being much in prayer. It is by filling your minds with thoughts of God out of His holy Word. It is by being friends of the good and gentle and pure. It is by forgetting yourselves, and taking an interest in others, and living for the sake of making them happy. A godly soul is like a great globe-lamp: as long as it is thinking about Christ's love, and God's majesty, and the good of men, it is brilliant, and its light becomes brighter and brighter; but as soon as it begins to think about itself, smoke mingles with the flame, and the globe turns dim.

**III. It does Good Unawares.**—Moses did not know that his countenance was shining, but whenever he came within sight of the multitude at the foot of the mountain, they saw it, and it produced the deepest impression on them. It did them more good than anything else could have done. It told them what he had seen in the mount. It assured them how blessed it was to be near God. It made them feel their own wickedness; for they fell back from Moses in terror, as Peter did from Christ, when he cried, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'.

So those who have the beauty which comes from within do good unawares.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 154.

# LEVITICUS

## THE TWO BIRDS

(In Ascension-tide)

'But he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields.'—LEVITICUS XIV. 53.

THERE were two little birds. The priest killed one over the running water, and then he dipped the living bird into the blood of the dead bird, and into the water, and then he took the living bird, and let it go, let it fly 'out of the city into the open fields'. Do you see it? What does it mean? Can you think? It means Jesus. 'The dead bird' and 'the living bird' are Jesus. A great many things go to make a picture of Jesus. The two birds here make a picture of Jesus. 'The dead bird' is Jesus dying on the cross; 'the living bird' is Jesus going up into heaven. And as 'the living bird' was dipped into the blood of the dead bird, it is to teach us that Jesus went to heaven because He died, as it says in the Philip-  
pians: 'He became obedient unto death. . . where-fore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name'. Do you see? The dead bird and the living bird both Jesus; 'the dead bird' Jesus dying, 'the living bird' Jesus going to heaven,—going to heaven because He died.

'The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.' 'Thou hast ascended up on high. Thou hast led captivity captive; Thou hast received gifts for men.' I believe these thousands of thousands of angels were there to make a grand procession into heaven. 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.' That was the other side of the cloud. Angels and archangels making a grand triumphant entry; the gates opening their heads, and letting in the King of kings.

So he went to heaven. 'The bird' flew away into the open fields. What happened there? Where did He go? Can you tell me? To the highest place. To what is called 'God's right hand'. God has not 'hands,' He is a Spirit; but it means the highest place in heaven. There He sat. Why did He sit? Shall I tell you? He had done His work; so He rested. He was going to stay. When you are going to stay anywhere, you sit. He was the King's equal, equal with God. We do not sit in the king's presence unless told to do so. If you go to see the queen, you must not sit down till the queen tells you to do so. But He was equal with the King of kings, He was 'the King of kings'. He sat on His throne. Those are the reasons why He sat there.

What is He doing there? Can you tell me? I can think of four things—can you? What is He doing there? Can you think? There He is, and He is there for us.

He is holding ground for us. It is as much as to say, 'Where I am, there you shall be also'. Just as we keep a place for anyone, so He is keeping a place for us.

Another thing. He is governing us. 'He is the Head over all things to His Church.'

A third thing is, He is praying for us.

A fourth thing—He is sending us the Holy Ghost to prepare us to come there; and at the same time He is preparing a place for us when we are prepared. Are you ready? Are you prepared? There is a prepared place for prepared children.

That is what He is doing there, in heaven. There we must leave Him—till He comes again.

Now I want to go back to Bethany. There were the disciples 'gazing up into heaven'. They were 'worshipping'. They were quite right. They worshipped. But perhaps they were gazing too far. Some people are very fond of being always gazing, always in a sort of *reverie*—thinking, not doing, wasting their time. So while they were gazing two men came to them, in white apparel, and they said, 'Why stand ye here gazing? Go to Jerusalem, as you were told, and wait for the Holy Ghost.' It was as much as if the angels had said—'You will see Him again. Do not be unhappy! "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen Him go into heaven".'

I want you to think a little more about it. We may call Ascension Day 'the Coronation Day'; the *crowning day*; crowning King Jesus! He was always Lord, always King; but now He went up, as a Man, to be crowned as a Man, 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. St. John says (Rev. xix. 12) that he saw Him thus: 'On His head were many crowns'. Several people have seen Jesus in heaven. Do you know who? St. Stephen saw Him. St. Paul almost, perhaps quite. St. John saw Him. And He had 'many crowns'. St. Paul says that the people, to whom he was useful, were his crowns; speaking of the people who were converted through his instrumentality, he says, 'Ye are my crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus'. I suppose it is the same with Jesus. His people are His crowns. Would you like, on the great Coronation day, to put a crown on the head of Jesus? You can, if you give your heart to Him now; you will be a crown upon His head then. If you are His child, you are His crown. If you bring anybody to love Christ you will put a

crown on the head of Jesus. Even a little boy or girl can put a crown on the head of Jesus. Try to do it. Crown Him!

One of the greatest events that ever happened in the world was when the Roman emperors used to come from their grand battles and victories, and go in triumph up the Appian hill. They were wonderful things. Did you ever read of them? I will tell you a little about it. It was the custom for them to have their enemies—those whom they had conquered—tied to their chariot wheels, and so they dragged them along by their side. So our Great Conqueror 'led captivity captive'. He led His enemies captives. When Jerusalem was taken, His enemies were taken captive. But the great thing was when the Roman emperors came back and had their triumphs, they used to fling very large gifts upon the people. Just what Christ did. 'He hath gone up on high, and received gifts for men.' And He flings his gifts—large and free—to all who wish or seek them. He is a Great King, and He has great gifts to give you. He has gone up to be a King for ever. Expect great things from Him because He is a King.

Very soon you will die. What will happen then? What will happen when you die? Your body will be put into the grave—just as a little seed is put into the ground. Not to stay there. There it will be for a time. But where will your soul be? If God's child, in Paradise. You will be in Paradise. The 'bird' flies to Paradise.

Then, when Jesus comes, your body will come up out of the grave, and your spirit will come up out of Paradise, and they will meet, and your spirit will go into that body again, and it will be *one bird* then. The dead bird and the living bird then both one living bird; and it will fly away—fly away, up above the blue sky—all among the stars, and beyond the stars; fly away, free and happy 'in the open fields'—nothing to tie you down then, nothing to clog you to earth. Then there will be no sin. You will be *free* then. You will fly away! you will fly away! 'into the open fields!' *into the open fields!*—JAMES VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (4th Series), p. 305.

## POLITENESS

LEVITICUS XIX. 9, etc.

FOR my 'Words' this morning I propose to read four of my favourite texts which are little known. They form a lovely sermon in themselves. They are from a strange Old Book which is rarely read—*Leviticus*.

'When ye reap the harvest of your land thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord. Thou shalt rise up before the

hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.'

Now are not those lovely verses worth remembering, teaching us that we ought to be thoughtful and polite and kind? The lesson that I read from the 1st Epistle of Saint Peter held two words which some of you noticed, I dare say—'Be courteous'. And sometimes we are inclined to wonder that that should be in the Bible! Yet when you look in the Bible with eyes that understand, you will see that the Bible is full of courtesy and kindness.

You remember the story of Moses' politeness, how one day he found seven girls together drawing water out of a well and filling the troughs for the sheep to drink from, and there came a lot of rude men who drove the maids away, and Moses was angry, and he said, 'Shame! shame! Ladies first!' And the lovely part of that story is that one of those girls afterwards became Moses' wife.

Another story just as familiar to you is how a poor widow woman—a foreigner too! was gleaning in a stranger's fields, and the bluff old farmer saw her, and he said to his reapers, 'Now, mind you drop a few handfuls of corn for her to pick up'. And they did it so that she did not know, and was not therefore ashamed. He might have gone to her and said, 'You are very hungry, aren't you? here's some corn for you; it will keep you from starving; now run home'. *That* would have shamed her. But although Boaz was a rough-handed, unpolished old farmer, who didn't wear tailor-made clothes, he was a gentleman!

Politeness and courtesy are small things to speak of, but they are *not* small things by any means.

It is very useful sometimes to look into the history of words. The origin of 'polite' is strangely interesting. Some say that 'polite' comes from an old Greek word that stands for 'city'; and city life polishes people into being polite! But we know very well that people who live in London are not all polite. There are some who say that 'polite' is derived from *polio*, I polish or smooth. So that politeness is to life what lubricating oil is to engines. Politeness helps things along wonderfully! Boys don't think much of it: 'Oh! that is Miss Nancy all over—polite, indeed!' Do you know that the stronger and greater a man is, the more need there is for him to be polite and courteous? For 'politeness' means self-restraint, self-respect, self-sacrifice. 'Oh!' you say, 'surely not!' Now just you try—(it may be a hard effort, but it is worth making)—try to be polite as many times as you can to-day and to-morrow. See if it does not mean denying oneself in little things. And politeness on a large scale is heroism. Heroism is just politeness grown big.

Now you and I cannot—if ever we want people to care for us and think kindly of us—afford not to be polite. 'Oh,' you say, 'I mean always to call a spade a spade.' No! no! Please *don't*! Sometimes it is far better not to call it anything, but to leave things unsaid; to be kind, to be thoughtful is better than to keep on calling spades spades.



There is an old story told of Henry Ward Beecher which I have told before, but no matter; it has so much beauty in it that it is lovely to tell. How one cold night he saw a little news-vendor's boy shivering; his very teeth were chattering, so that he could hardly call out the names of the newspapers. Beecher, for pity, bought the whole sheaf of papers under the boy's arm, and said, 'I am afraid you are very cold to-night, my boy!' And the boy said, with a gulp, 'I was, sir, till you passed by'.

An act of kindness puts warmth into the heart and joy into the brain. To go through life making sunshine for other people is to be a Christian, for we read that Jesus 'pleased not Himself,' and 'went about doing good'.—BERNARD J. SNELL, *The All-Unfolding Love*, p. 77.

### THE ALMOND-TREE FLOURISHING

'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.'—LEVITICUS XIX. 32.

It is of respect and reverence for the aged that my text speaks. Notice how strikingly and beautifully the commandment is expressed. It is not said, Rise up before the old, or the man whose hairs are hoary, but making the head itself as it were a person, the text reads, 'Rise up before the hoary head'. So, again, it is not, Honour the old man, though that is the meaning, but 'Honour the face of the old man'. What a fine picture the whole presents to our eye! We seem to see some aged veteran, his hairs, changed with years and toils, falling down, white as almond blossoms, thinly, but gracefully around his temples; his face tracked with little furrows, drawn by the plough of time; a soft haze resting on it, for the shadows of decaying strength are mellowing and veiling the glow of life, yet with the light of long experience gleaming out through it—we see him pacing slowly along, or entering some apartment, and as he comes youth and manhood rise to do him honour. They rise, for that is the instinctive gesture of respect. So people rise up to receive a guest. So worshippers rise to praise or pray.

Now, if reverence is due to old age from all, it is most of all right that the young should render it. To you, therefore, who are still in childhood, I am anxious so to recommend the duty, that when you next see an old man, rich or poor, you may be touched by the sight of his hoary hairs, and give him respect. What I have to say will apply to the old whose character does not shame their years. Alas! there are some whose hoary heads are not a crown of glory to them, but a badge of disgrace. Even these must not be despised, but pitied and prayed for, and their white hairs should lead us to treat them tenderly. But let us take the face of an old man who has been a child of God, and we have something to read which ought to awaken your love and reverence. The face of the old man! look at its wrinkles, and think what cares, and griefs, and watching, and working traced them there, and honour it for *what it has seen*.

The face of the old man! look at it again; it speaks of failing nature, but it has a beauty of its own—honour it *for what it is*. The face of the old man! it seems to gleam with a light belonging to another world. It is near the veil, and soon will look through it. Ah! honour it for *what it must soon see*. These are the three reasons I would give you for respecting the aged.

### I. For What the Old Man has been, Honour Him.

—There is something about all old objects that calls for our veneration. An old tree, for example, or an 'ivy-mantled tower,' though but a ruin. I remember one old tree tenderly. When I was a child it was a majestic plane, in the prime of beauty and strength. What a crown of broad leaves it used to put on in spring, and in winter how it used to toss its arms about, and battle with the blasts! As years passed, it bowed its lofty head slightly before the western winds; and when I saw it last, with loosening root and battered boughs, it was like an old man stooping to the grave. I think, had some woodman's axe been ready to strike it, I could have prayed him to spare that tree. I know another far older, growing by the roadside, throwing its arms across the highway; and when a stranger passes on the stage, his neighbour, belonging to the district, will somewhat proudly point it out, and expect a word of admiration for its bulk and age. You have seen a picture of the cedars of Lebanon that are still remaining. They are stately and beautiful in themselves; but the most interesting thing is, that they have lived through many centuries, and are a few of 'all the multitude that are left'. This leads me to say that old things are especially venerated when we connect them with some historic event or scene. This makes Palestine such an interesting place to visit, so many Bible memories hang around every spot. What Scotsman can look without reverent feelings on the house, in one of the streets in Edinburgh, where John Knox lived? What Christian man could visit unmoved the chapel in Chester where Matthew Henry preached, and the little vestry-room where he is said to have written much of his Commentary? It is this principle we are speaking of that gives so much interest to our museums and old libraries. In a college library in Bristol they show you Bunyan's Concordance to the Scriptures. Suppose a child who has read 'The Pilgrim's Progress' to have the book put into his hand, and to be told, 'That is the Concordance John Bunyan used when he studied his Bible, and wrote his dream,' do you think he could toss it about like a common school-book? Now, in all these cases where the objects are dead, we somehow give them, as it were, the feelings of the living. We think of them as having seen and felt what was passing in the world when they were young. But an old man has actually been such a witness of past things as we suppose them to be. He has beheld and suffered much, making him sage with experience. What stories he could tell!

Rise up before the hoary head when you think

what toils and trials have bleached these hairs to snow. Honour the face of the old man, when you consider that every line of that shrunk and furrowed countenance may be said to have its history, for years of the battle of life graved it.

Rise up with deepest respect before the aged Christian. What an honourable man is an 'old disciple,' a consistent follower of Jesus, grown grey in his Master's service! What battles in his soul he has fought! what wrestlings in the closet he has had! what blows from Satan! what helps from God! What lessons he has learned from the Bible, and in the furnace of trial! What works he has wrought! and what a work of the Holy Spirit's making he himself is! If you saw a beautiful statue coming from the hands of an artist, and knew what thought and care, and thousands of touches it cost him, you would see nothing so wonderfully formed and polished as a good old man's character. Rise up before him, for he is one of the pillars of the earth; and say, 'My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!'

In a word; for what he has seen, for what he has suffered, and for what he has done, honour the face of the old man. But—

**II. For What he is, Give Honour to the Old Man.**—There are two things about old age that should win your kindness and regard: It is beautiful, and it is dependent. And children, especially, should be touched with both.

What! you will perhaps say, do you think old age beautiful? I do. I have seen many a beautiful face shrunk and puckered with age. It is not the beauty of childhood or youth that lies there, but it is beauty. It is a great mistake to think that old people must necessarily be disagreeable, unamiable, querulous. They often are, doubtless, but they need not be. They are often quite the opposite. 'The beauty of old men is the hoary head.' It is a fine thing even to look at—a finer thing to think of. A child of God, with graces ripe for heaven, is very beautiful to see. And one of the charms about good old age is this—it comes back to the simplicity of childhood. It is with life as with the sun. See him at rising. His soft bright beams are sent aslant over the landscape: he climbs higher as the day goes on, till at noon he looks right down from his high seat in the sky; but by and by he will sink down to the same level he started from in the morning, and shine with the same softened light; only we will look on him with different

eyes, and the air will be different, and the shadows will be turned the other way—not to get gradually shorter, but to deepen into night. So old age comes back to childhood's level. Some one has imagined a scene like this—a grandfather is coming to visit a son or daughter's house; and as he comes up the road, away the children rush to meet him—one carries off his staff, another claims the vacant hand, and a third frisks round about him, while the happy old man feels his heart younger among that second generation than when he gambolled with his own boys and girls thirty years before. Is not the sight a cheer to see?

**III. For What he is Soon to be.**—The light of earth is fading from the face of the old man. But there is another light soon to break upon his dim eye. And did you ever think that he is about to become young again? In another world he will be a child of days, if they count days there. If an angel should ask him in heaven how old he is, he will not answer as he does here. But there is enough in the thought that he is soon to be away from us, to make us cherish him. I do not envy the man that can look without a feeling of awe on the death-bed of the humblest and poorest person. A dying man in one chamber and a living king in another—which should other men rather neglect? Which is the worthier of reverent watch? That dying man's face is lying in the clear or the dark of the near eternity. There, too, the face of the old man must soon be—your own, indeed, may be lightened or shadowed first, but his, you know, must soon be. You will not have him long. He is going away into the land of the unseen. He is going, if a Christian, into the presence of the King. He is going to leave your company for that of the glorified saints. Rise up before him, for ere you meet him again he may be standing before the throne. Honour him, for to-morrow he may be walking with angels—

High in salvation, and the climes of bliss.

Honour him, for he whose voice you heard reading or repeating to you some of David's psalms, and John's words to the little children, may soon be conversing with David and John themselves. Rise up before him, for soon (let me speak it with reverence) the Saviour himself will step from his throne to welcome him. 'Behold, I see the heavens opened,' said the martyr Stephen, 'and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God'.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church*, p. 154.

# NUMBERS

## THREE LINKS IN A GOLDEN CHAIN

'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.'—NUMBERS VI. 24, 25, 26.

At the end of the service in all our churches, just immediately before the congregation disperses, God's ministering servant, as you know, 'pronounces the blessing'.

The words I have now read to you contain the form of blessing which Aaron the High Priest was commanded to pronounce over the children of Israel as they were journeying in the wilderness.

It was a blessing doubtless which included in it young Hebrews as well as old.

That child nestling in its mother's arms Aaron must have addressed when he said—'The Lord bless Thee'. Yonder Hebrew boy or girl plucking the desert flower, or filling their little baskets with the morning manna: that blessing must have embraced them—'The Lord bless Thee'.

And will it be different now, think you, with Jesus, the Great High Priest of His Church? No, when He was on earth how often have we thought of Him as blessing the little ones. And He is the 'same, yesterday and to-day and for ever'. 'He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great' (Ps cxv. 13). Observe the blessing of the text is uttered three times. It reminds us of the mother bidding farewell to her sailor boy as he is for the first time leaving his home to go to sea, and to embark alone on the more dangerous waves of 'this troublesome world'. She pours upon him her blessing, as she kneels along with him in her chamber. Then she follows him to the door, and again imprints the parting kiss on his cheek. And, as if this were not enough, she stands on the path outside the porch waving the last signal of love as he vanishes from her sight on the distant highroad. 'As one,' says God, 'whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you' (Is. lxvi. 13).

Let us look to this threefold blessing. I shall call it three links in a golden chain.

**I. God the Father 'Bless Thee and Keep Thee'**  
I have just spoken of the tenderness of a mother's love. Let me speak now of the strong hand and gracious help of a father. In the dark winter night when the storm is raging loud, when the rain is battering on the roof, the wind sighing among the trees, the swinging branches striking against the window-pane, and the house rocking to its foundations—how safe the little child feels when he sees his father sitting by his bedside drawing the curtains

around him! With his hand locked in his he forgets the storm. His fears are at an end, and laying his head on his pillow he goes to sleep again.

It is so with your Heavenly Father—when you know you have His blessing, how happy you are!—'So giveth He His beloved sleep' (Ps. cxxvii. 2).

However otherwise rough and arduous your journey through life may be, depend upon it, it will be a safe and a happy one if you begin it by saying in words I often quote to you: '*My Father*, Thou shalt be the guide of my youth!'

**II. God the Son 'Make His Face to Shine upon Thee, and be Gracious unto Thee'**. What could you do without the shining face, and the gracious love, and the finished work of Jesus? The Israelites in the wilderness saw every morning a lamb brought out and sacrificed. The blessing of the text was never pronounced till after the shedding of blood on the altar of sacrifice.

So there can be no blessing to you or to me, apart from the precious blood of Christ. One of His names is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. As the first thing the little Hebrew children heard in their tents in the morning was the bleating of the lamb, so would I like that every morning as you go to your knees in prayer, your eyes should fall on the Great Sacrifice. 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. 29).

I have just spoken of God *the Father* 'blessing you'. But do you remember a beautiful verse which tells you how that blessing reaches? If you will turn to the opening words of the Epistle to the Ephesians, you will there read: 'Blessed be the God and *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ'. It is the blood of Jesus which gives you peace. The Apostle speaks of 'peace through the blood of the cross'.

**III. God the Holy Ghost—'Lift up His Countenance upon Thee, and give Thee Peace'**.

That 'Peace with God,' which I have just told you is purchased by the blood of Jesus, is secured and continued by the gracious work of the third Person in the Holy Trinity.

Can you quote any verse which tells us this?

In Romans xv. 13, the Apostle prays that the saints to whom he wrote might be filled 'with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope by the power of the *Holy Ghost*'.

Oh the blessing of having the Holy Spirit—the 'Dove of peace' hovering over the soul! What true peace He and He alone can confer!

Look just at one among many Bible illustrations.



See how quietly the Apostle Peter sleeps in his prison between the two armed soldiers! (Acts xii. 6). He had much truly to make him afraid, when he thought of the morrow and of cruel Herod's wrath and judgment-seat. But he remembered the words of the Lord Jesus how He said—(and said specially to him as one of the Apostles), 'When they shall deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak but the *Holy Ghost*' (Matt. x. 17). Well may that Holy Spirit be called '*the Comforter*'.

The Apostle's last prayer to the Thessalonians is in very simple words; you will easily carry it away in your memories. It is about this same 'God of peace'. 'Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace, always, by all means' (2 Thess. iii. 16). '*By all means*'. If you are the children of God, if you love God, and seek to please Him, then everything will help to increase your peace, and nothing will make you afraid. You will be able to do what Ezekiel speaks of, to sleep in the very wilderness and in the woods (Ezek. xxxiv. 25): as if the darkness will be unable to frighten you, or the wild beasts and their howlings to disturb and terrify you. You will sleep under the shadow of the Almighty's wings, and His angels will encamp about you! 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace (or, as that word in the Hebrew is repeated to give it force, *peace, peace*), whose mind is stayed on Thee' (Is. xxv. 3).—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 307.

#### CALEB

'But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully,' etc.—NUMBERS XIV. 24.

##### 1. God's Testimony Concerning Caleb.

1. He had another spirit with him.

The contrast is between the spirit which he cherished and (a) that of the spies who brought back a discouraging report; (b) that of the people who were thereby roused to murmuring and rebellion. The spirit of Caleb was:—

(i) A conciliatory spirit.

'Blessed are the peacemakers.'

(ii) A cheerful spirit.

'All things work together for good,' etc.

(iii) A prompt spirit.

'Let us go up at once.'

(iv) A courageous spirit.

'He stood almost alone.'

(v) A trustful spirit.

'The Lord is with us.'

2. He followed the Lord fully.

One of the greatest needs of the present age in the Church and in the world is *thoroughness*.

(i) Only a thorough Christian is of much real service in the cause of Christ.

(ii) Only a thorough Christian enters fully into the enjoyment which Christ's service affords.

(iii) Only a thorough Christian will remain steadfast in the hour of trial.

##### II. The Reward which God Promised Caleb.

'Him will I bring,' etc.

It is useless to pretend to be indifferent to rewards.

The promise was fulfilled at last.

God has promised something better for us.

Our hopes and expectations rest upon the Word of God. 'The Lord hath said.'—*Seeds and Saplings*, p. 64.

#### THE BLUE RIBBON

'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.'—NUMBERS XV. 37-39.

Don't think I am going to give you a lesson in dress-making. I could not if I tried. Dressmaking has always seemed to me to be something as wonderful and as grand as shipbuilding or engine-making. Indeed, I think there is only one thing which ladies do that is more mysterious—and that is bonnet-building! Nobody—no man or boy, at any rate—can ever hope to understand how that is done! I have watched, and watched, and tried to find out how a dress was made, but what with gores and gussets, and tucks and plaitings, and other strange things, I have got quite lost and bewildered, and made to feel that I was only a man after all.

But I do know something about the fringes which the Jews had on their garments; know more about them perhaps than even mother does, though she could make a dress and I couldn't. You see, this comes in with my business, and she says it is no business of hers; and yet I think there is something she might learn from it too. Anyway, there is something to be learnt that may do us good.

The Jews were to be a separate people: that is, they were not to mix themselves up with other nations and be like them. They were to show wherever they went and in whatever they did that they were the Lord's people—that their God was Jehovah, and not an idol. And so the Lord commanded them to wear a peculiar fringe on the edge of their garment, with a blue thread or cord running through it, so that whenever they looked upon it they would remember they were the Lord's people, and would behave accordingly—and whenever other people saw them they would know that these were Jews and not heathens, and expect them to behave differently. It was a good distinction to have—good at the first—for it helped the people to keep right, just as his uniform helps to keep the soldier up to the mark for fear he should bring disgrace to his regiment.

But by and by the Jews made a great fuss about this fringe. They had it trimmed up in all sorts of curious ways, with all sorts of curious meanings. They had four tassels on the fringe, and these tassels had to be made of eight white threads, and one of these had to be twisted round the others seven times and then tied in a double knot, and then wound round eight times and tied in a double knot, and then

eleven times and a double knot—and a great deal more of the same kind, without which the tassel was not thought to be perfect. In fact they came to make so much about the fringe of their garments, that some of their foolish-wise men said the chief thing in the Bible was what it said about the fringes, and one great man (his name was Rabbi Joseph Ben Rabba) was so particular about this, that when he was coming down a ladder one day he stepped on one of the threads and tore it off, and he would not budge from that step till the fringe was repaired. They had come, indeed, to think so much of that fringe that they made it broader and broader till it became a kind of veil to come between them and God, and Jesus showed up their foolishness when He spoke against them for ‘enlarging the borders of their garments’. What God had meant to be a help to them, they had come at last to make a hindrance—as a great many people have done in many ways when once they have begun to make more of the thing itself than of what it was meant to do or meant to teach.

The Jews still wear a garment with this fringe upon it. Yes, but in this country they take good care you shall not see it: they wear it now under their outer garments, and so they think they are keeping the command to wear fringes, while at the same time they are getting off being known as Jews. That is like a soldier keeping his uniform in a box, while he goes about dressed as a civilian. Was that what his uniform was given him for? No indeed! He is no true soldier who is ashamed to show his colours, and he is no true Jew who wears the tassels and the fringe, but takes good care nobody shall see them.

But sometimes there are Christians who do something like this. God doesn’t ask us to show that we are Christians by the kind of clothes we wear, but He does ask us to show it, and show it everywhere, by the kind of hearts we have. Wherever we are and whatever we do, we should make it clear that we are Christ’s. But some do not. When they are in church, or among good people, they show the fringe and the tassels, as it were—they speak of good things, and look like good people—but when they are in the world and among the wicked, they hide the fringe and the tassels, so to speak—they do things and say things just as the people do and say who are round about them. Is that right? Is that honest? Is that true? No, no! It is false, false, cheating and deceiving others and themselves.

Don’t you be of that sort; never be ashamed of your colours. Wherever you are and whatever you do, see that you always make it clear that you are Christ’s boy or Christ’s girl. You don’t need to have a hem to your garment, but you should have a hem—a sacred hem to your heart.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children’s Pew*, p. 187.

### THE BLUE RIBBON

‘A ribband of blue.’—NUMBERS XV. 38.

Gon gave to His ancient people the Jews the Ten Commandments of the moral law; but He also gave

them a great many others. The Ten Commandments were spoken by the voice of God amidst the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai, and they were afterwards written by the finger of God upon two tablets of stone; while the numerous other commandments were spoken by the voice of Moses, and written down in the Books of Moses. The Lord said by His prophet Hosea, long afterwards, regarding the people’s disobedience, ‘Though I write My law for Ephraim in ten thousand precepts, they are counted as a strange thing’.

Here in this passage we have a commandment about wearing ‘a ribband of blue’.

I. What was this ribband? (The word in English may be spelt in four different ways: ribband, ribbon, riband, and ribon.) It was a part of the outer or upper garment which the Jew wore. That garment had fringes or tassels at the four corners, and each fringe was to be fastened at the edge of the robe with this ribband. The garment was worn over the shoulders like a plaid, and was so folded that the four corners with their tassels hung down.

The colour of this ribband—or, as it is in the Revised Version, ‘cord’—was blue. Blue is the colour of the sky, and thus it naturally reminds of heaven. It is the colour of what is true and sterling—‘true blue,’—and thus it reminds of the God of heaven. The Scottish Covenanters adopted blue as their colour, in contradistinction to the royal red; and so one of our poets speaks of ‘Presbyterian true blue’.

What was the use of this blue ribband? Why were the Jews to wear it? The words which follow our text (verses 39 and 40) tell us, ‘That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them,’ ‘and be holy unto your God’. The ribband of blue was like the facings on the uniform of a famous regiment. It was like the badge or livery by which the servants of a nobleman are distinguished. The Israelite wore God’s livery. He was a marked man in his own eyes, and in the eyes of the heathen around him. The Hebrew nation were holy to the Lord—‘a peculiar people’—God’s very own.

What about the wearing of the blue ribband? All Jews were to wear it—‘both young men and maidens, old men and children’. The law was binding upon all persons, of every age, and of both sexes. The Jews judged that even blind people must wear the ribband; because, though they could not see it themselves, others could. The Lord Jesus Christ wore it just like others; He felt that ‘thus it became Him to fulfil all righteousness’. And it was probably the fringe which hung over His shoulder—called ‘the hem of His garment’—which the diseased woman touched in the crowd, and by the touching of which she was healed. The sacred badge was also to be worn always and everywhere, and in all circumstances. The Jew was to remember that ‘the eyes of the Lord are in every place,’ and that he himself was never to be ‘off duty’.

II. Now, all this may suggest to us much that we can think of with profit. God does not indeed ask you and me to wear 'a ribband of blue'. The 'ten thousand precepts' which God gave to Israel have passed away, and this precept among them; but the Ten Words which werespoken from Sinai and laid up in the ark of the covenant remain.

In our country members of the Order of the Garter wear a blue ribbon; and so the world has come to be used regarding the attainment of an object of great ambition. Those who abstain from wine and strong drink in some cases wear a blue ribbon as a sign of the pledge which they have taken. But the Hebrew law on the subject is no longer in force.

God employs other means to remind you and me of His commandments. Our memories are as treacherous, and our hearts as deceitful, as those of ancient Israel were. And 'He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust'. 'We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' So the Lord in His goodness has surrounded us with aids to knowledge and obedience.

The Bible is one reminder. The Hebrews, while they were sojourning in the wilderness, had no Bible. And even after they were settled in the land of Canaan, the Old Testament grew up most slowly, and very few of the people were able to possess copies even of a small part of it. How different it is with us in these days! God has given His Church a completed Bible, and we all have copies of the Book in our hands. No Christian home is without one. And all the commandments of God are written in this blessed Book.

The *Lord's Supper* is another reminder. It is a memorial of Jesus Christ—of His death, of His dying love, of the nature of His salvation, and of His promise to come again. 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.' The Supper keeps this great event, and its meaning, before our mind's eye. And it calls up within the hearts of those who love the Lord Jesus a crowd of holy thoughts and feelings.

The *Holy Spirit* within us is also a reminder. He dwells within the Church now, as He did not dwell within the Jewish Church. In the days of the 'ribband of blue,' His influences were given only to one small nation, and for the most part only to a few outstanding men in it, such as leaders, prophets, or kings. But now God pours out His Spirit upon all flesh—upon the mass of the people as a whole, and upon each single believer. He puts His Spirit within His people's hearts, and so writes His law there. The Comforter teaches us all things, and brings all Christ's commands 'to our remembrance'.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 26.

### THE WELL OF GRACE

'Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.'—NUMBERS XXI. 17.

It is curious that Holy Scripture says nothing about the well of Beer except the brief allusion made in

the book of Numbers. Yet the remembrance of that deliverance, and the blessings brought by that spring, remained in the memories of the Jews, and fashioned itself into strange traditions. And it must have caused great joy. The people slaked their thirst at the fountain, filled their bowls, watered their cattle, and then burst forth into that song of joy, of which the Book of Numbers contains a fragment.

In the opening words, I think, we are reminded of another hot day, many hundreds of years later, when another lawgiver was weary and faint, and sat by another well, and promised other and more refreshing water.

'Then cometh He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

'Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.'

What is that water of life? Is it not the joy, peace, and comfort of the Holy Ghost—in a word, the spiritual spring in your hearts? You have all of you there, deep down in your hearts, a little fountain of grace, whence flow forth holy thoughts, earnest desires.

In Flanders there is a pretty legend told of a place called Temsche. A clear fountain was in a farmer's field. He was a churlish man, and would not let the villagers go into his field to draw water from it, one hot summer when the land was parched and all the wells and pools were dry. Then a holy maiden, living there, went and filled a sieve with water, and shook it over the neighbouring common, and wherever a drop fell from the sieve there sprang up a living fountain.

Now the old Jewish nation was much like that cross-grained farmer; it would keep Divine grace to itself alone: it would have the living fountain of spiritual life for its own use only, and would deny it to the Gentile world. Then came holy Church, and took up the living water, given her by Christ, her founder, and she scattered, and still scatters it, over all the wide earth: and in the soul of every baptised Christian up springs a fountain of spiritual life.

How many a fountain of life there is! a little fountain opened by God, springing up for eternity.

'Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it,' says our text. It was the song of the Israelites when they saw the clear water bubble up out of the dry dead sand. And shall not we sing out and rejoice too at the sight of the fountains opened around us, on all sides, in all hearts? Spring up blessed, precious Grace of God, in fountains over the whole earth, purifying it, making its dry places blossom as the rose, glad and beautiful as the garden of the Lord. Aye! ever will it flow in faithful souls, ever will it sparkle with the light of Heaven shining on it, ever will it leap up, reflecting Heaven!

In each heart is that heavenly opened well—but in what condition is it? Too often choked with dirt and stones, and overgrown with noxious weeds.



Do not allow the little wells of conscience to get clogged with worldly cares, selfish thoughts, and sinful desires. You must labour at them, and keep them clean. The princes, we read, dug with their iron-shod staves. So do ye. Clear away all that defiles the spring of conscience: tear out all that chokes it, remove the earth, the stones—that is the worldly cares and fleshly lusts that war against the spirit: search the heart with great care, by self-examination, by the rule of God's commandments, on your knees, asking the help of God, fearfully, diligently, earnestly, penitentially, and never doubt but the spring will leap up clear and fresh again.

### BALAAH

'And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

'And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.—NUMBERS XXII. 13 and 21.

WHAT was Balaam's prime mistake? I think it was this, that he trifled with his conscience. At first, when the princes of Moab asked him to go with them, he knew perfectly well that it was wrong. Probably, if he had spoken out like a man, they would never have asked him again. But he began saying to himself, 'What a pity that I should lose all this money! Might not I go? Might not I just try again if God will let me go? What does it matter if it is a little wrong? How do I know that anything worse will ever come of it?' Ah! but this is just what it is so fatal to say. God speaks once to the human soul, and speaks loudly; but if you disobey His voice, it soon sinks to a whisper. For it has been well said that in worldly things second thoughts are proverbially wiser than the first, but in spiritual things it is first thoughts which are the wisest. Your own experience, although not a long one, will tell you that, when a sin first presented itself to your mind, you knew it to be wrong, utterly wrong, but that, if you set about asking yourself how wrong it was, and whether it was not less wrong than it had seemed at first, you ended pretty well by thinking it to be right. Believe me, the only way of doing sometimes what is manly is to do it at once and without thinking twice about it. For you know there is a voice which tells you what to do, and what not to do. I do not speak of it in any philosophical terms. But look back upon your life; has there not been a time when you have seemed to hear, as clearly as you hear me now within this Chapel, something which said to you, 'The thing you are going to do is a sin; you must not do it'? Have you done it, all the same? Then let me tell you a simple story which was told twenty years and more ago from this same pulpit by one of the most eminent Harrow masters, and which is so appropriate to the argument I am using that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of repeating it, although there may be some among the masters here who heard it then. 'When I was a little boy,' a good and great

man said, 'in my fourth year, one fine day in spring, my father led me by the hand to a distant part of the farm, but soon sent me home alone. On the way I had to pass a little pond, then spreading its waters wide; a rhodora in full bloom, a rare flower which grew only in that locality, attracted my attention, and drew me to the spot. I saw a little spotted tortoise sunning itself in the shallow water at the root of the flowering shrub. I lifted the stick I had in my hand to strike the harmless reptile; for though I had never killed any creature, yet I had seen other boys out of sport destroy birds and squirrels and the like, and I felt a disposition to follow their wicked example. But all at once something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said, clear and loud, "It is wrong". I held my uplifted stick in wonder at the new emotion, the consciousness of an involuntary but inward check upon my actions, till the tortoise and the rhodora both vanished from my sight. I hastened home and told the tale to my mother, and asked what it was that told me "it was wrong". She wiped a tear from her eye, and taking me in her arms, said: "Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey it, it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear and disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends on heeding that little voice."

I. There are some people who make a boast, as it were, of having what I may call a loose or easy conscience. They think it a sign of intellectual light to be free from conscientious scruples. They say, 'Oh! yes, no doubt there was a time when it was thought wrong to touch or to read newspapers and secular books on Sundays, or to go to a theatre, or to participate in dancing or card-playing or any such thing; but these were Puritan days, and we have outlived them, we have learned to laugh at them, we do nowadays pretty much as we like'. This is the sort of language which is often heard in the world. Now what I say to you about it shall be simple common sense. I agree to some extent with the people who so speak. It is a mistake, I think, to multiply the number of sins. There are so many things which are wrong in the world, and it is so hard for most of us to keep from doing them, that I should say we make a mistake if we voluntarily add to the number of things which we may not do. Thus to say that it is wrong to dance or play cards—wrong in itself, I mean, for I know only too well that these are often the occupations of frivolous persons—this is a needless aggravation of human duty. Only forgive my saying that, if one must make a mistake, then it is better to err on the side of abstaining from good than on the side of running heedlessly into wrong. It is better to have a weak conscience than a wicked one; it is better to count the things which are right to be wrong, than to count the things which are wrong to be right. Take, for instance, the rule of Sunday.

II. Again, let me impress upon you that your conscience is plastic; you are always forming it, always making it better or worse. If you listen to it when it speaks, it speaks more plainly; if you neglect it, it will simply cease to speak.

III. Lastly, follow your conscience, and it shall lead you to God. Believe me, the only way to get more spiritual light is to live according to the light you have. It may be only a ray that breaks athwart the darkness; make the most of it, and some day you shall have more. There may be hereafter only one duty which is clear to you, only one friend or kinsman whom you can help, only one boy whom you can keep from evil, only one piece of work which you alone can do. Well, do that. Try to accomplish that one object. Try to save just that one human soul. Gradually, it may be after many a day, the clouds will break. You will know more of God's will. He will seem nearer to you. His voice will sound more clearly in your soul. You shall enter into that Divine peace which the world may neither give nor take away.—J. G. C. WELLDON, *Sermons Preached to Harrow Boys*, 1885-6, p. 185.

#### JOSHUA, THE LEADER OF GOD'S PEOPLE: AND THE HOLY NAME JESUS

NUMBERS XXVII. 18-23; LUKE II. 21.

This man Joshua is a type of One Who came long after him. See how this is.

I. First let us remember his name was not always Joshua, but Oshea. Now the name 'Oshea' means 'Salvation'. When he was chosen to be one of the twelve spies, the name of God, that is, the name Jah, was added to his name, and instead of Oshea it became *Jehoshua*, or, as we generally write it, *Joshua*. This name means, then, as you can see, God the Saviour. It was given to him that all might learn that by him God would save the people from the wilderness, and bring them into the beautiful land.

Now, you can see the type, and why we have this lesson to-day. Joshua, born of a poor mother in slavery in Egypt, has the same name as the little Child Who was born at Bethlehem on Christmas Day. You remember what the Angel said, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins'. 'Jesus' means 'God the Saviour'. To-day, the Feast of the Circumcision, Jesus received His name. He was only eight days old, but His Blessed Mother did not keep Him without His name. Some people keep their children three months, or six months, or even longer, before they bring them to be baptised and to have a Christian name, although the Church says they are to be baptised not later than the second Sunday after their birth. But Mary obeyed God, and to-day, the eighth day from His birth, Jesus Christ was circumcised, and received the Name of God, sent Him by His Angel. Remember, then, that Joshua bears the same name as Jesus, our Saviour, our King.

II. And now what did Joshua do? He went before the people; he was their leader until they

came safely into the fair land which God had promised to give.

There is a fair land before us, more fair and beautiful than any the eye of man has yet seen. Its name is heaven, and the way into it is through paradise. Jesus leads His children there. He went to paradise, and then He rose again, and afterwards ascended into heaven. There He waits now for us; to that fair land He leads His children who love Him.

Canaan, to which Joshua led the Jews, was beautiful, but what was its beauty compared to the land Jesus will give us, His glorious heaven?

III. Think of another way in which Joshua is like our Lord Jesus. He could not take the people into Canaan until he had fought and overcome all their enemies. How many battles he fought we do not know, but they were very terrible. But God helped him.

And Jesus all His life through was fighting against Satan and his evil spirits. We do not know, we cannot tell, how bitter that fight was, but we know a little how Jesus suffered in the greatest fight of all when He died on the cross, going to fight in the world we cannot now see.

And He fights for and with His children now. We are signed with His cross that we may fight manfully under His banner. We have courage to fight; we know we can win the victory, for our Joshua—Jesus our Saviour—has fought first, and now fights with us.

IV. One other thing you can think of. When all the fights were over and they were safe in their own land, Joshua divided the land to the people. He it was who said as God taught him what each was to have; their land, their streams, their land for corn and their land for vineyards—all was as he said.

Think how Jesus gathers His children in heaven, and gives each one his place in the kingdom prepared for him. No one will be forgotten, no one left without a place, no one need be jealous of another. Jesus is there; Jesus loves all; Jesus gives to each one the place that is best for him, the work that will make him happiest, the place in heaven that will give him the greatest possible joy in the presence of God.

#### SIN FINDING OUT THE SINNER

NUMBERS XXXII. 23.

I HAVE often spoken to you about the goodness of God. And I have told you of things fair and pleasant by which that goodness is made known. But there is one proof of His goodness I have never named to you. It is the fact that, in making the world, He made it impossible for evil to hide. Sooner or later the evildoer is sure to be found out.

Sin is so bad, so hurtful, so cruel a thing that God's love for us will not let it remain unpunished. And, because it might escape discovery by man, He has caused that it shall be its own detector and punisher. Lies, thefts, murders, prides, greeds, envies—they turn

round, one way or another, and smite the doers of them. The white cheek, the red blush, and the downcast eye, which are seen in the faces of people discovered in an evil way, are just sin's ways of beginning to find out the sinner.

It was Moses who first said, 'Be sure your sin will find you out'. He was speaking to thousands of people at the time. If thousands of people should agree together to sin, their sin will find them out. But the words are as true of one as of many. In God's world evil cannot hide. In God's world evildoers are certain to suffer for the evil they have done. This is the lesson I want to give you to-day.

A little more than fifty years since, a ship sailed out of Archangel in the White Sea on a long voyage into the Indian and Chinese seas. When the ship was far on in the voyage a trouble rose up between the sailors and the captain. And one night the sailors joined together and killed the captain. The two mates stood by the captain and fought against the sailors. They also were killed. Then the sailors took the ship into their own hands. But when this dreadful work was past and there was a new captain and new mates, they began to be afraid of each other. And it was remembered that two of their number had cried out, 'Don't kill the captain'. One night these also were killed and thrown overboard. And still they were afraid. There is no peace to evildoers. In the cook's galley there was a young lad who had taken no part in the murders, but he was seen to tremble when the bodies of the dead sailors were cast overboard. Perhaps he might tell when they got to land. They were passing a desert island, far away from the usual course of ships, and they made pretence to go ashore for water, taking the young assistant cook with them. And there, while he was sent into a valley out of view to search for water, they left him, and sailed away. They had just this little touch of pity, or it might be in their hurry to get away—they left a gun and powder-bag on the shore.

Two years passed. And out of the usual path though it was, another ship happened to pass this very island, and sent ashore to seek water. And there, under the shelter of some rocks, the searchers came upon the bones of the sailor lad, and his gun lying by his side. The poor lad had seen that it was death for him. And with a nail or a sharp stone he wrote on the stock of the gun the whole story of the mutiny and the murders, and the names of the ringleaders and of the murdered men.

The bones were buried in the lonely island; the gun was carried to Archangel. And in a few months the murderers were tried and judged to death. In this strange way their sin found them out.

But this discovery might never have been made; the murderers might have escaped punishment: yet their sin would none the less have found them out. Their sin would have found them out by its effect on their own souls. This will be made plain to you by the story I am about to tell.

Towards the middle of the last century, two sons of a Highland gentleman had a quarrel. It happened, while the rage of anger was still in their hearts, that the elder of them had to leave home for a distant town. And, his way passing through a lonely moor, he met his brother returning from a walk. The rage sprang up from their hearts into bitter words, and then into blows. And in the struggle the younger brother was struck down by a blow on the head. He did not spring up again; he did not attempt to rise; he was never more to rise: he was dead.

In a moment horror took hold of the elder brother. His sin had found him out. He was a murderer. He threw himself down beside the body of his brother. He called him by name. He cried to him for pardon. But no ear was open to hear his cry. Life was for ever gone. Then a new horror seized him. He himself would have to die for this crime. And shame and heart-break would fall on his father's home. He looked around. Not a single creature was in view. He lifted the dead body in his arms; he carried it to a kind of bottomless pit in the moor, and threw it in. He heard the awful thud of it far down. And then he flung in furze and bracken and stones to cover. After that he continued his journey. The murder was never discovered.

But from himself it refused to hide. The memory of it was with him every day thereafter. It was his first thought in the morning, his last at night. It was with him in his waking thoughts; it was with him in his dreams. Like a book, his memory laid bare its pages, and he saw over again the lonely moor, the battle between the brothers, the lifeless body, the white face, and the black pit into which the dead was thrown. He could not bear to live in the Highland home. Everything there seemed to call out to him for his dead brother. He travelled. He went into business. All was in vain. His memory threw up the terrible story from within, and made pictures of it in his soul. And day and night he had no rest from the memory of his sin.

One Sunday evening he was staying in a village on the coast of Fife, and a minister very famous in Scotland at that time—the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine—was to preach in the church. Mr. Erskine's text was the sixth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill'. When the sermon was over and Mr. Erskine resting in his lodgings, this poor man called on him and told him all his sad story. Twenty years had passed, and never till now had he breathed a word of it. But now he could no longer be silent. The sermon had searched him through and through. The thing he wanted to know was whether he should tell his crime and suffer the punishment of it. Mr. Erskine was very kind but very searching in his questions. Was it known that his brother was killed? Was any innocent person suspected? Was any one kept out of earthly goods which, if the brother had lived, would have come to him? When he got satisfactory answers to all these questions, he said: 'No good



public end would be served now by giving yourself up; you would not yourself find peace in that way. Nobody is wronged by your silence. Only God can help you. Tell Him the whole story. Throw yourself with all your heart and soul on His mercy and forgiveness; and in what remains of your life walk humbly with God, and do justly and mercifully to your fellow-men.

I do not know the rest of this man's story. If he took Mr. Erskine's advice, his sin would no doubt be forgiven by God. He would know, and he would live in the comfort of knowing, that, though the memory of the past could not be blotted out, he would not be shut out of heaven by his sin.

Now I know well, I have felt all through in speaking to you, that this is a terrible truth I have been setting before you. But in bringing my words to an end I will say this very earnestly to you: You are young, and not yet as strong as you will be. And sin is very deceiving. And some day it might happen—it has happened to others as young as you—that sin, in some form or other, might overtake you and deceive you, and you might yield to it. If unhappily this should befall you, remember that the great object should be, not to escape the punishment, but to flee from the sin. But if either you be discovered in it, or should yourself wake up to the thought, when as yet no one else knows of it, that God knows, and that your own memory has taken note of it and is keeping record of it to you—if this should happen—then, with your whole heart and strength, turn round and tell Him of the sin that has hurt you, and be sorry for it, and do not repeat, or wish to repeat it, and you will be forgiven. It is to bring us to seek this forgiveness that He has made it a law in the world that our sins shall find us out. Sin found out and forgiven, that is the meaning of the beautiful words, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 196.

### THE WARNING AGAINST SIN

'Be sure your sin will find you out'.—NUMBERS XXXII. 23.

ONE thing which has much to do with leading people to commit sin is the thought that they can do it in secret, and not be found out. Many a boy is tempted to play truant, instead of going to school, because he thinks that his father and mother will never know anything about it. Many a robber breaks into a house at night, and steals what he wants, because he thinks that no one sees him, and so his sin will never be found out. But here in our text we have a warning against sin because it is sure to be found out. And there are three things for us to remember, which help to make it sure, and should lead us to mind this warning.

1. **And the First Thing which must make it Sure that Sin will be Found Out is—'The Presence of God'.**—This is something from which we can never get away. David was feeling this when he

wrote the 139th Psalm. Here he asks: 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.' Solomon says, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good' (Prov. xv. 3). If we could only remember these four words—'Thou God seest me'—it would be a great help to us in minding the warning we are now considering, and in keeping us from committing sin. The thing that tempts us to commit sin more than anything else is forgetting that God is looking at us all the time.

**The Second Thing which makes it Sure that Sin will be Found Out is—'The Power of God'.**—Men often try to do things, but are obliged to give up, because they have not the power which is necessary for doing them. You know for how many years the different nations of the world—England, our own country—Germany, and Russia have been trying to get up to the North Pole; but they have never succeeded in doing it. All their efforts have been in vain. They have not the power to get there. But it is very different with God. He has all power in heaven and on earth. Nothing is impossible for Him to do. He has the hearts of all men in His hands, and He can turn them as the rivers of water are turned. He can do according to His own will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth.

And so, when He says to us, 'Be sure your sin will find you out,' we know very well that He has power enough to bring about this result. The angels of heaven serve Him. And suns, and moons, and stars, and seasons, and day and night, and all things serve Him. His power controls them all. He has determined that every sin committed by any of His creatures shall be found out. And nothing is more sure or certain than that this will be done in every case. Now let us look at some illustrations of the different ways in which God's power works to find out the sins of His creatures. Our first story may be called—'The Sinner Found Out'.

'I was walking along the Strand in London one day,' said a gentleman to a friend, 'when I saw a policeman go up to a young man, and lay his hand upon his shoulder, saying as he did so, "I want you". The young man turned very white,' said the gentleman. 'There was a startled, frightened look in his eyes, but he made no resistance, and as he walked off with the officer, I heard him say, "I thought it would come to this; it's just what I expected".'

On making further inquiries about him, this gentleman found out that the short, sad story of that young man was this: He was the son of respectable parents. After serving his apprenticeship with a carpenter in the village where he lived, he came to London seeking for work. He found employment in

a large shop, where he received good wages, and for a while he was getting on nicely. Unhappily he made the acquaintance of some bad companions. They taught him to drink and to gamble, and to spend his money very foolishly. Before long he found himself heavily in debt. One day, the counting-house clerk being absent, this young man was sent to the bank to get a cheque cashed for a large amount of money. Then the thought came into his mind, 'If I keep this money I can soon get out of debt'. And then, instead of going back to the shop, he kept the money, and went off with it. He was afraid to go home, or show himself among his friends. He went to another part of London, and prowled about the little streets and alleys, feeling very wretched and miserable, and afraid of being seen by anyone that knew him. Several policemen were put upon his track, and had his appearance described to them, and this was one of them who found him. He was tried for stealing, found guilty, and sent to prison. It was the power of God which caused this young man to be found out in his sin, and that power is able to find out every sin. That young man's sin was found out for its punishment. But sometimes God's power leads to the finding out of sin for its pardon.

I have one other story under this part of our subject. We may call it—'A Secret Murder Found Out'.

A man who worked on a farm in the State of Connecticut murdered the owner of the farm one night, in the stable near the farmer's dwelling. Then he robbed the farmer's house of all the money and the valuable things to be found in it. After this he left that part of the country and went abroad. He remained away for twenty years. A large reward was offered for the apprehension of the murderer, and a particular description of his person was published in the newspapers to aid in finding him. But of course, as he had gone immediately out of the country, he could not be found.

But now I wish you to notice, in what I am going to say, how singularly the Providence and power of God worked together to have this man's sin found out at last.

On coming to his old neighbourhood after twenty years' absence, he supposed, of course, that the murder, and all about it, would be forgotten; and so it was. But God had not forgotten it; and see how strangely He caused it to be found out. On arriving in his old neighbourhood the man took a walk, so that he could look around and see what changes had taken place. As he was walking it began to rain heavily. He sought shelter from the rain by going into a tavern, which stood near the old farm on which he used to work.

The tavern had changed hands, and all the persons about it were strangers to him. As he stood by the open fire drying his wet clothes, another man, who had also been out in the rain, stood by him drying his clothes too. They had a few words of conversa-

tion together. Then this other man went to the window, and looked out to see if it was likely to continue raining much longer, as he wished to go on his way. Now it happened that one of the panes of glass in that window had been broken. To keep out the cold air a piece of an old newspaper had been pasted over it. This newspaper was twenty years old. As the man stood there and looked at that paper, he read an account of a murder which had been committed in that neighbourhood. A large reward was offered to the person who should find the murderer. Then a description was given of the personal appearance of the murderer, and special mention was made of a peculiar mark which he had on his face. This startled the man very much. He read the article over again, very carefully. Then he said to himself 'That man standing by the fire yonder must be this murderer'. Then he walked quietly back to the fire and looked at the man again. He became satisfied that he was right. Then he asked the keeper of the tavern to go with him into another room. As soon as they were alone he told him of his suspicions. A constable was sent for. The man was arrested and taken to prison. In due time he was tried, found guilty, and hung.

How wonderfully God's power operated to find out that murderer's sin, and to bring on him the punishment which he deserved! And here we see that the second thing which makes it sure that sin will be found out is—the power of God.

**III. And the Third Thing which makes it Sure that Sin will be Found Out 'is—The Purpose of God'.—**What this purpose is we are plainly told by Solomon when he says that, 'God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil' (Eccles. xii. 14). This purpose makes it absolutely sure that every sin which is committed will certainly be found out, sooner or later. Men's purposes do not amount to much, because they are not always able to carry them out. But it is very different with God. He says Himself, '*My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*'. Men's opposition to God's purposes amounts to nothing. It was the purpose of God that the children of Israel should be delivered from their house of bondage in Egypt, and go to live in the good land which He had promised them. Pharaoh refused to let them go, and used all the power of his kingdom to keep them still in bondage. But by the simple waving of the rod of Moses, all Pharaoh's efforts were made useless, and God's purpose was carried out. So it always *has* been, and so it always *will* be.

Our last story may be called—'Murderers Found Out by the Birds'.

The incident of which I am now about to speak occurred in Germany in the year 1804, and in connection with a town called Lenep. In this town was the only post office for a district of country lying around it, which embraced a number of miles.

There was a man who acted as postman for every

district, whose name was Heinrich Lutz. He used to go out from Lennep three times a week, and carry the mail to all the villages and settlements round about the town for several miles in different directions. He was a good and faithful man. He had been engaged in this work for a number of years, and was very much respected and loved by all who knew him. The road over which he had to travel for some distance lay through a deep forest, where sometimes robberies, and even murders, had been committed.

One day, in the fall of the year spoken of above, Heinrich set out as usual to go through his district, delivering the mail which he took with him, and bringing back the letters and papers which were given him to take to the post office. He generally left after an early breakfast, and returned by the close of the afternoon.

In the course of his journey on the day of which we are speaking, as he was passing by the deep forest, two robbers rushed out upon him. They knocked him down, and began to beat him with their heavy clubs. While they were doing this, he said to his murderers: 'Don't think you will escape. Your sin will find you out. God can make the very birds of the air tell of you,'—pointing, as he said this, to a flock of wild birds that were then flying over them.

The friends of Heinrich looked for his return in Lennep that evening, but he did not come. By the next morning the sad tidings of his murder were received, and his dead body was brought home. There was a great excitement in the town all that day.

Towards the close of the afternoon two strangers came to the inn in the town, and asked for lodging for the night and for some supper. The wife of the keeper of the inn waited on the strangers. Among other things she placed a couple of roasted wild birds on the table for them to eat. While one of the men was cutting up the birds, she heard him say to his companion, 'These birds won't tell about it, anyhow'. This excited her surprise. As she looked carefully at the other man, she noticed some spots of blood on his blue jacket. This alarmed her. She went at once to her husband and told him what she had seen and heard. A constable was sent for. The men were taken up, and put in prison. On being examined the contents of the mail bag were found about their persons. Then they confessed their crime, and told what Heinrich had said about the birds before his death.

They were tried, condemned, and hung. Their sin was found out by means of the little birds.

But sometimes sins are not found out in this life. What then? Will the warning of our text fail in their case? No; but they will go on to the day of judgment, and then—every sin will be found out.

Every sin that is committed is written down in the book of God's remembrance.

If we repent of our sins, the blood of Jesus will blot them all out. But if we do not repent, they will remain written there. At the day of judgment that book will be brought forth, and then we may be sure that our sins will find us out.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 138.



# DEUTERONOMY

## THE BEE

'And the Amorites, which dwell in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do.'—DEUTERONOMY I. 44.

ISRAEL had determined at all hazards to storn the strongholds of the Amorites. But as those who disobey God can never stand before their enemies, the Israelites were no match for those hardy mountaineers of Seir. Like infuriated bees rushing out from their nest, the Amorite hordes swept out from their mountain fastnesses, and utterly overwhelmed the hosts of Israel. They 'chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah'.

This is the only sense in which the bee is referred to in Holy Scripture. The ant may be introduced as an emblem of industry and instinct; but the bee is always regarded as one of the scourges of mankind. It recalls an incident in the African travels of Mungo Park. 'Some of his people having met with a populous hive, imprudently attempted to plunder it of its honey. The swarm rushed out in fury and attacked the company so vigorously that man and beast fled in all directions. The horses were never recovered and several of the asses were so severely stung that they died the next day.' The bee was clearly a savage and dangerous annoyance. They 'chased you, as bees do'.

But turning to the bee itself, let us note the three principal materials it uses in its hive.

**I. Wax.**—Nothing can be done in the furnishing of the hive until a sufficient quantity of wax has been provided. And this, like the gossamer threads of the spider, is drawn from the insect's own body. The process of secretion, as it is called, may last for some twenty-four hours; and when it is completed the wax projects from between the segments of its body in the form of thin plates. The material is then taken up into the mouth and undergoes a process of mastication, until at last it issues from the mandibles in the form of a small white ribbon.

This is the material with which they build up their hexagonal or six-sided cells; and marvellous is the skill they show in the ingenious arrangement. Like Plato, they might fitly inscribe over their portal, 'Let no one ignorant of geometry enter here,' for the bee is entitled to a first place in the ranks of the geometers. It is even asserted on the authority of the Rev. J. G. Wood that the angles of the beecell are so mathematically correct that by their measurement an error in a book of logarithms was detected; and Mr. Darwin himself admits that 'the comb of the hive-bee is absolutely perfect in economising labour and wax'.

The form of the cell has three distinct advantages. It combines the greatest strength, the largest storage, and the least expenditure of material and labour; and 'the little busy bee,' as if acquainted with these strict mathematical principles, has followed them so accurately that it easily steps into the first rank as a born mathematician.

But how is this fact to be accounted for? What is the explanation of these inimitable architectural powers? 'Without thought or even the organ of thought, the bee can produce work which embodies thought.' But to whom does this thought belong? Can there be thought without a thinker? Can there be the marks of intelligence without an original and creative mind? No! at the building up of a bee-cell, just as at the framing of a world, the thoughtful soul is face to face with Him whose mind is stamped on every part of creation—with Him who is the great and faithful Creator, whose tender mercies are over all His works.

**II. Honey.**—After the construction of the cells comes the gathering of the honey. Honey, as every boy knows, is the thick, sweet fluid which bees gather from the cups of flowers. Or in the language of myth and fable, it is the veritable nectar of the gods. The mouth of the bee is framed for the purpose. It is so constructed that it forms a sort of proboscis or tongue by means of which the insects suck up the nectarine juice. It serves both as a mouth and a pump through which the liquid passes into the first stomach, and thus is carried to the hive.

The abundance of honey is frequently mentioned in Holy Scripture. Palestine itself is described as 'a land that floweth with milk and honey'. And we remember that on one occasion Jonathan, the Son of Saul, was faint and weary, and when he saw honey dripping on the ground from the abundance and weight of the comb, he took it up on the end of his staff, and ate sufficient to restore his strength (1 Sam. xiv. 27). John the Baptist also was evidently in no danger of starving from lack of food, when the wild bees afforded him a plentiful supply of the very material which was needed to correct the deficiencies of the dried locusts which he used instead of bread. His food was locusts and wild honey.

**III. Pollen.**—Honey is not the only substance that bees carry home to the hive. They also collect in considerable quantities the fecundating dust or pollen of flowers. If the long tongue is specially adapted for sucking up the one, the hind legs, supplied with a brush of hair, are equally fitted for collecting and conveying the other. When the bee visits the flower in question it dives deep down among the dust-

like powder, and comes out again, all covered from head to foot, like a miller well dusted with his meal. But applying the brush of hair which it carries for the purpose, it speedily brushes the pollen all down in the form of a tiny ball, and carries it home on its hind legs to be used in the economy of the hive.

But what is it for? To make *bee-bread* for the young bees. The hexagonal cells are not all used for the storage of honey. A very large proportion of the comb is set apart for the hatching of the young ones. And these infant bees are voracious eaters. Like other little children, they have to be carefully nursed and attended to, and the sagacious nurses have quite enough to do in providing them with the right kind of food. Ordinary honey is too strong for their infantile digestion, and therefore the honey is mixed with the pollen to render it a fit nourishment for these fastidious babies.

This is the only object the *bees* have in collecting the pollen; but it is not the only end they serve in the plan of the great Creator. Unknown to themselves they are doing a great work in the propagating of flowers. The fertilising dust of one flower must be conveyed to the corresponding organs of another; and the bee, like a village postman, is brought in to convey the necessary love-tokens. Apart from this service rendered by the bee, the wild flowers that deck the fields and highways would soon be conspicuous by their absence.

We cannot, then, go back to the point from which we started, and say that the bee can only be regarded as a savage and dangerous annoyance. It fills a very important place in the economy of nature. As the maker of *wax* it is the prince of mathematicians; as the gatherer of *honey* it is the bringer of many choice blessings; and as the collector and distributor of *pollen* it is at once a sagacious nurse, and one who dispenses a harvest, 'sowing the To-be'. Well may we sit at its hive and learn wisdom.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 63.

#### THE BLESSEDNESS OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

'Thou shalt be blessed above all people.'—DEUTERONOMY VII. 14.

I wish now to speak of *four* things in which it is true of real Christians that they are 'blessed above all people'.

In the *first* place, they are so in their Names.

If we look into the Bible we shall find a wonderful difference between the names or titles of those who are *not* Christians and of those who *are*. Where God speaks of those who are not Christians, He calls them 'fools,' 'wicked ones,' 'children of wrath,' 'cursed children,' 'enemies of God,' 'a perverse and crooked generation,' 'serpents, a generation of vipers'. What a dreadful thing it is to think of the great and good Lord of heaven calling any person by such names as these! And then, after looking at these, how pleasant it is to turn and look at the names which God gives in the Bible to His own people—to all who love and serve Jesus! He calls them His 'beloved,' His 'dear

children,' 'the excellent of the earth,' His 'chosen ones in whom His soul delighteth,' His 'lambs,' His 'treasure,' His 'jewels,' 'the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty'. Jesus calls His people by all these sweet names now. But hereafter, He says, they shall be called by 'a name better than of sons and daughters; even by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name'. If I am really a Christian, I cannot tell what the name is by which I shall be called in heaven. But I know it will be a *new* name. It will be a beautiful name, fit for that glorious place, and the holy, happy company that will be there. And when we think of the precious names by which Jesus calls His people now, and the still more precious names by which He will call them hereafter, we may well say of Christians that they are 'blessed above all people'. In their *names* they are thus blessed.

But *secondly*, they are 'blessed above all people' in their Dress.

I don't mean the dress of their bodies, but the dress of their souls. Christian people wear the same kind of dress for their bodies that others do, but they wear very different kind of dress for their souls. We don't know what the soul is. We only know that it is that strange thing in us which thinks, and loves, and which will live for ever. When our body dies, we know that the soul leaves the body and goes out from it. We can't see it when it goes. We don't know how the soul looks, or what the form or shape of the soul is. Perhaps it looks just like the body. Perhaps it has the same form and appearance as the body, only it is not heavy or solid like the body. If this is so, then, if we could see the soul of some dear friend who has died and gone to heaven, we should know it in a moment, just as easily as we should know the body of that friend. And there is a particular kind of dress for the soul, just as there is for the body. We read in the Bible that St. John saw the souls of some of the people of Christ who had died. They were in heaven when he saw them, standing before the throne of God. And when he saw those souls, they were all clothed. Yes, and their clothing was all alike. They were clothed in garments that had been washed and made white for them by Jesus their Saviour. The Bible tells us of a robe or garment or dress that Jesus puts on the souls of His people when they become Christians, that is, when their hearts are changed, when they repent of their sins and believe in Him. This is spoken of as a white dress or robe. It is like that which Jesus Himself wore when He was on the Mount of Transfiguration. Three of His disciples were with Him then. They saw Him while He was transfigured, and they have told us how He looked. His face was shining like the sun, and His garments were white as snow, so as nobody on earth could whiten them. What a blessed thing it is to have this dress on! There are only two kinds of dresses for the souls of people spoken of in the Bible. One of these is this beautiful white dress which Jesus gives to His people. The other is one which everybody who is not a Chris-

tian must wear. It is spoken of in the Bible as made of 'filthy rags'. It is stained and polluted, and dreadful to look at. If we are Christians, if we really love Jesus, we shall wear the white garment which He gives to His people. If we are not Christians, this garment of 'filthy rags' is the only one our souls will ever have to wear. When we die, and our souls go into the presence of God, they will have nothing upon them but those 'filthy rags'. Oh, how much ashamed we shall feel! How totally unfit we shall be to go among the white-robed company in heaven! And yet we shall never be able to get rid of those rags there. We shall never be able to get any other dress for our souls to wear.

But if we *are* Christians, if we really love and serve Jesus, then our souls will wear the same robe that Jesus wears Himself. This is the most beautiful dress that ever was. Jesus made it Himself for His people to wear. Nobody else will wear it but them. It will be more beautiful than the dress of the angels. The Bible says it will be 'of wrought gold, *all glorious within*'. This dress is so beautiful that even God loves to look at it. It will never grow old. It will never wear out. It will never get soiled or torn. It will be always new and beautiful.

How true it is that real Christians are '*blessed above all people*'! They are so in their *Dress*.

*Thirdly*, they are so in their Relations.

I was reading lately of a very good answer made by a little boy in England, who afterwards became a very distinguished minister of the gospel. One of his schoolmates was boasting one day about the number of rich and noble relations that he had. Then he asked the future minister 'if there were any *lords* in his family'. 'Yes,' said the little fellow, 'I know there is *one* at least, for I have often heard my mother say that the *Lord* Jesus Christ is our elder brother.'

And when we are in trouble or distress, what a real comfort it is to have a relation who is able and willing to help us!

Some years ago a poor Austrian officer, who was very sick, arrived at a town in Germany which was celebrated for its baths; and crowds of sick people were constantly coming there with the hope of being cured of their various diseases.

The officer seemed very feeble, and it was not likely that he would live very long. He applied for lodging at several of the hotels, but they would not take him in, because they were afraid he might die in the house. Presently he came to the last hotel where he could hope to get a room, but he was told again that there was none vacant. The poor soldier was greatly distressed. He knew not what to do. But just then a gentleman who was living in the hotel, and who had heard the answer given by the landlord, stepped forward and said:—

'This officer is a relation of mine, and I will share my room with him. He may have my bed, and I can sleep on the sofa.'

The landlord could not make any objection to this,

and the poor sick soldier was carried to the room of the gentleman who had claimed him as a relation. When he had rested a few moments and recovered his strength a little, his first question was:—

'May I ask your name, my kind friend? How are you related to me? On which side?—through my father or my mother?'

'I am related to you,' said the gentleman, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has taught me that every suffering man is my brother, and that I should do to him as I would like to have him do to me!'

How kind and pleasant that was! This is just the way in which Jesus would have us all act. And this is just the way in which He is acting all the time to His people who are His poor relations. He tells us all to 'call on Him in the day of trouble, and He will hear us'. He is called in the Bible the 'brother born for adversity,' 'the friend that sticketh closer than a brother!'

And the best thing about the Christian's relations is, that he can never lose them. The Bible tells us that 'nothing can separate us from the love of Christ'. Jesus says to His relations that He 'will never leave them, nor forsake them'. The dearest relations that we have in this world are sure to be separated from us by death. And sometimes this separation comes very suddenly and unexpectedly.

The *fourth* thing in which they are blessed above all people is in their Riches.

It is said of Jesus our Saviour that 'though He was rich' before He came into this world, 'yet for our sakes He became poor, that we,' His people, 'through His poverty might be rich'. Jesus came into this world on purpose to make His people rich. He says in one place in the New Testament that He will give His people 'gold, fine gold, gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich'. But it is not the gold and silver of this world that Jesus promises to give His people. It is the gold and silver of heaven that Jesus makes His people rich with. This heavenly gold and silver means the grace and blessing of God. Those who have this kind of riches are blessed above all people for two reasons: one is, their riches can always make them happy; the other is, they will last for ever.

The people of Christ are blessed above all people *in having riches that can always make them happy*. The riches that people get in this world cannot make them happy. When Stephen Girard was alive, he was the richest man in the city of New York. But you may judge how happy he was from what he wrote to a friend one day:—

'As for myself,' said he, 'I live like a slave. I am constantly occupied through the day, and often pass the whole night without being able to sleep. I am worn out with the care of my property. If I can only keep busy all day, and sleep all night, this is my highest happiness.' Certainly *that* was a very poor kind of happiness.

The riches which Jesus gives to His people are laid up for them in heaven. There they are perfectly



safe, there they will last for ever.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 61.

### PEU ET PEU

'By little and little.'—DEUTERONOMY VII. 22.

This was the way the Israelites were to win their battles and conquer Canaan—it was to be by little and little. And it is the way you must win your battles too. We have all to fight battles—every one of us—and the biggest of all is with our own hearts. There are so many sins there that we must subdue—there is selfishness—there is temper—there is disobedience, and there is laziness and a great many sins besides. We must get the better of these if we would not have them get the better of us: we must subdue the heart for Jesus' sake if we would be Christ's boys and Christ's girls.

And the best way to do it is by little and little. Sometimes you have tried to be good, all good—and all good at once—but you have not succeeded. No—for a boy who has been sick and got weak might as well try to become strong—all strong—and strong all at once. The best way for him is to get strong by little and little—first getting a little stronger to walk, then a little stronger to play, and then a little stronger to work—then a little stronger to stand cold winds and biting frosts. 'One thing at a time, and that done well, is a very good rule, as many can tell.'

And it is a good rule for fighting against sins. Begin with one at a time. Suppose you begin with disobedience: it vexes father and mother very much, does it not? to have to tell you to do a thing two or three times before you do it. Fight that sin first; determine to get the habit of doing what you are told to do, and doing it at once. It will not be very long before you will get the better of that sin, for the habit of obedience will grow. Then there is the sin of temper: there is the frown that comes on your face too quickly; determine to smooth that away; and there is the hasty unpleasant word you are so ready to speak; determine to pray that away, and to be kind, and think kindly, and be gentle. And so with many sins besides: fight them down, one by one, and by little and little you will conquer them.

How many minutes do you think there are in a year? 525,600; more than half a million! How is a little weak watch going to tick through so many minutes? Could it do it all at once? No indeed. How does it manage then? By taking one at a time, and so it gets through them all. Do you the same with the sins that beset you. Begin to conquer one—and battle with it till you have conquered it—and the next, one will be conquered more easily by little and little.

But you must have patience and hope, and so you must be often with Jesus. However busy you are, you must take time for food for the body, or else you will not be able to do the things you are so busy about. It is the same with the soul—however busy

you are, take time to find food for that, and it is Jesus alone who can give it. So from this day determine every day there are two things you will do: first, Speak to Jesus—that is prayer—pray to Him; and next, Let Jesus speak to you—read a little bit, if it is only a verse or two out of the Bible, for that is Christ's Word, and He speaks to us through it.

Do that, and you will get strength to fight against sin, and the Lord will help you to drive out the ugly things that are in the heart.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 192.

### HOW TO TAKE A BIRD'S NEST

'If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.'—DEUTERONOMY XXII. 6, 7.

'Thus,' said the Rabbis, 'is the *least* among the commandments of Moses.' But I am not sure about that. True, the commandment is only about a bird's nest; and nests are not as big as churches. Nevertheless, a commandment about a very little thing may be a very large commandment. And at least one part of this commandment is very large; *viz.* the reward attached to it. The precept runs into a promise. The precept is only about a bird's nest; but the promise is that he who obeys it shall have many days and happy days. 'If a bird's nest be before thee, thou shalt not take the mother-bird with the young or the eggs, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.' Now think of that! If you take your bird's nest in the right way, you shall have a long life and a prosperous one! Why, this is more than is promised to those who honour their father and mother! *Their* days are to be long in the land; but their promise says nothing about prosperity. Whereas those who take heed to their ways when they are looking for birds' nests are promised, not long life only, but that it shall be *well* with them as long as they live. The two greatest blessings the Jews knew, long life and prosperity, are to be granted to those who keep this commandment. And that can hardly be 'the least of the commandments,' which carries so large a blessing with it. It ought to be a great commandment, if we are to get so much for keeping it.

And I think I can show you that it has great meanings in it; that it is quite worth our while to try to understand and to obey it. There are at least three such meanings in it. (1) It set a limit to the natural greed of men. (2) It brought the law of God into the little things of life. And (3) it taught the sacredness of love.

#### I.—It Set a Limit to the Natural Greed of Men.

—What would be the first impulse of a Jew who found the nest of a quail, or a partridge, with the mother-bird sitting on the young ones or the eggs? Of course, his first impulse would be to take all he could get,

the old bird as well as the eggs or the young. But to do that might be very poor thrift, and very poor morality. For in destroying the parent-bird with the young, the man might be helping to destroy a whole breed of valuable birds. He would get a dinner for *to-day*, but he would be lessening his chance of finding one *to-morrow*. He would be helping *himself*, but he might also be injuring *his neighbour*. All the game birds would soon die out of England if they were not preserved, or if no close time were allowed them. And even that would not be so great a calamity to us as it would have been to the Jews, who depended much more than we do on hunting and fowling for their food, and who could not import birds from other countries, as we perhaps might do. Hence the Law of God stepped in, and said: 'Stop; think: take the young if you want them, but let the mother-bird go; for she may build another nest and rear another brood. Take enough for to-day; but don't forget to-morrow. Take enough for yourself; but don't forget your neighbour. He may find the nest next year, and may want it then even more than you want it now.' So that God's care for birds was also a care for men. He was teaching them forethought and charity. He was teaching them to be provident, and to be neighbourly, when He said, 'Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go'; *i.e.* Thou shalt do at least so much as that.

'Don't be greedy,' then, is the first lesson we find in our bird's nest. 'Don't snatch at all you can for to-day, careless about to-morrow. Don't grasp at all you can for yourselves, unmindful of others. Think of the future. Think of your neighbours.' And that is a lesson which all children need to learn. They cannot help being hungry, but they can help being greedy. It is natural and right that they should wish to have good things—not only good things to eat, but good things of many kinds; but it is wrong for them to grudge good things to others, to want to keep the best to themselves. Boys and girls should think of what they can *give*, as well as of what they can get. Nothing is pleasanter than to see a boy who is man enough to control himself, to govern and restrain his appetites, his passions, his tempers, unless it be to see a girl who is woman enough to think of others before herself, and to find her pleasure in pleasing them. Children who eat themselves ill, and play themselves cross, who cannot look beyond the present moment, and do not care who suffers so that they get their way, are like the Hebrew fowler who took the mother-bird with the young, and left nothing for to-morrow, nothing for his neighbour.

II. Another lesson taught by this law about a bird's nest is this: **It Brings the Law of God into the Little Things of Life.**—And that is just where we most need it, and are most apt to forget it. The words that told men how to take a bird's nest, taught them that there was a right and a wrong way of doing even such a little thing as that; and therefore they were very wholesome words. For what they meant was, that God was always with them, that nothing

so small could be but that they might do it unto Him; that even when they went out to walk, or to hunt, or to catch birds in the pastures and on the hills, they did not leave God behind them, nor their duty to Him; that God's pure and kindly will compassed them about on every side, and that they might show their reverence for His will even in handling a bird's nest. And what could make them, what could make *you*, happier than to feel that the great Father in heaven is always with you, even when you play in the fields; and, with you, both to show you that which is right and to save you from the pain of doing wrong.

Let no one ever make you think of God as hard and cold and stern, or of duty as simply painful and austere. God is *love*; and His love is all about you like a soft summer air which brings health and gladness with it. You need not be afraid of *Him*. He is your best Friend; better than father, better than mother even, the Friend whom you should be most glad to have with you. If He ever looks austere and rebukingly at you, it is only as a good father looks grave and forbidding, and shakes his head, when he sees that his child is thinking of doing something wrong, something the pleasure of which will soon pass, while the pain of it will remain. For it is this, it is wrongdoing, it is sin, not duty, which is really painful. To obey God, to do one's duty, is not painful, though there may be pain in it so long as we are weak. It is like breaking through a hedge to get into a field full of all delights; we may get a few scratches in passing through; but who cares for a few scratches from the hedge, if he is sure of a good time in the field?

III. But this rule about bird's-nesting teaches us that *all love is sacred*; and this is the most beautiful lesson I have found in it.

If the love of a bird is sacred, how much more sacred is the love of a boy or a girl, of a woman or a man! *All love is sacred*. It is base and wicked to take advantage of it, to turn it against itself, to use it for selfish ends.

Love is the strongest thing in the world. People will do for love what they would do for nothing else. And there are those who know that, and who take such base advantage of it that they sometimes ruin the character and spoil the life of those who love and trust them. There is nothing in the world so wicked, so base, so vile. If you have parents, or brothers and sisters, or young companions and friends, who love you dearly, O take heed what you do! Their love will be the comfort and joy of your lives if you retain and respond to it. But that love puts them in your power. You may hurt them through it, and grieve them through it, and make them go wrong when, but for you, they would have gone right. And if you do, you will be scorned by all good men and women. If you do, what will you say to the God of all love, and what will He say to you, when you stand before Him?—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 1.

## FIRST FRUITS FOR GOD

'And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which Thou, O Lord, hast given me.'—DEUTERONOMY XXVI. 10.

SUPPOSE you were living in the country, and your father gave you a little piece of ground in his garden to cultivate as a garden of your own; suppose you had a rose-bush, and day after day watched the first roses coming out in bud and flower; and suppose you had a strawberry plant, and watched it, at first white with blossom, and then saw the fruit coming in fine red berries: what would you do with your first flowers and first fruit? Keep them for yourself and eat them? No. I cannot think you would be so selfish and so greedy. Some fine morning you would give father and mother a surprise. They would come down to breakfast and find a rosebud or a strawberry on their plates. 'What is the meaning of this?' they would say; and you would look very pleased and reply, 'They are out of my own garden, the very first I got.'

First fruits for father and mother! Yes; and 'First fruits for God,' our Heavenly Father! Should not that always be the rule? All we have comes to us from Him. Fruit, flowers, friends, health, happy homes. 'Every good gift . . . is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' Should we not say, 'First fruits for God!' God gave the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. He brought them forth from slavery in Egypt, into a land flowing with milk and honey. That means that the grass in the pastures was so good that the cows gave plenty of milk, and the flowers in the fields so abundant and sweet that there were swarms of bees and hives of honey. Now, would it have been right for the children of Israel to keep all their good things for themselves? No. 'Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth . . . and shall put it in a basket . . . and thou shalt go unto the priest . . . and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us. . . . And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which Thou, O Lord, hast given me' (Deut. xxvi. 2, 3, 10). 'First fruits for God!' Let that be the rule for us all.

**I. First Fruits of Time for God.**—Time is divided into days and weeks and months and years, and we should begin each of these divisions of time with God and give the first to Him.

*Begin the year with God.*—Some churches have a midnight service on the 31st of December, and close the old year and bring in the new year with prayer and praise. Other people think it better to begin the year quietly in prayer at home, or in an early prayer meeting on New Year's morning; but there are few to be found, I hope, who do not have serious and grateful thoughts on New Year's Day, and try to begin each year with God.

*Begin the week with God.*—The first day of the week is 'The Lord's Day,' and should be kept sacred

for the Lord's service. The Jews kept Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. We keep 'The Lord's Day' in memory of the Lord's Resurrection, and thus devote the first fruits of our time each week to God. Happy are the families where this is done. No weekday books on Sundays, or weekday toys and games, but plenty of pleasure for all that. Rest from work and lessons. Father at home all day. A happy Sunday dinner all together, with some specially good things for the children. Plenty of singing. Bright services in Sunday school and church, and beautiful Bible stories of Jesus and His love. Although to some of us Sunday is the hardest day of the week, I am sure it is the happiest day, and 'the best of all the seven'.

*Begin the day with God.*—Let the first printed page on which the eye rests always be the Bible, and let the first waking thoughts be thoughts of gratitude to God for a good night, and prayer for a good day.

**II. First Fruits of Money for God.**—Children have not much money; all the more reason to make a good use of what they have. I knew a little boy who had an allowance of threepence a week, and he was taught from the first to divide it in this way—a penny for God, a penny to save, and a penny to spend. Divide your allowance as you think right, but always remember 'First fruits for God,' as Paul taught the Corinthians to lay by a certain proportion on the first day of the week as conscience should direct. Then if this habit is formed when you are a little boy or girl, as you get older and earn weekly wages or a salary and have a regular income, it will come quite easy and natural to set aside a fixed portion to be kept sacred for the service of God; and if this were done by everybody, by men and women as well as by children, all our Missionary Societies would have lots of money; and giving money, instead of being a pain, as it is to some people like the pulling of a tooth, would be a positive pleasure. And if a 'windfall' comes, a present or a legacy we did not expect, dropping like an apple from a tree into our lap, we should certainly think of 'First fruits for God'.

**III. First Fruits of Life for God.**—When God gave little Samuel to Hannah as her first-born child she gave him back to the Lord, 'As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord,' and little Samuel was not many years old before he gave himself. The Lord called him, and he replied, 'Speak; for Thy servant heareth'; and as the Lord's servant he did as he was bid.

If you wish to be happy, you will copy little Samuel and will do the same. You know much more of God than little Samuel knew. You know of Jesus and His love for children, and of His life and death upon the cross, that those who trust in Him may live. Do trust in Jesus, and begin to-day and consecrate the first fruits of life and time and talents to His service.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 169.



## THE HEAD, AND NOT THE TAIL

'And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them.'—DEUTERONOMY XXVIII. 13.

DR. JAMES BROWN, in his admirable *Life of Dr. William B. Robertson of Irvine*, tells of the young farm-servant lad at Greenhill, who, on the first occasion upon which he was present at the family Sabbath evening 'catechising,' when asked, 'What is the chief end of man?' replied, 'I dinna ken thae questions, maister; but I'm thinking mysel', though I may be wrang, that it should be his heid'. Hugh mistook the meaning of that grand opening question of the Shorter Catechism. And yet, taking his own peculiar view of its meaning, his answer was most correct. The head is the noblest and the most beautiful, as well as the most necessary part of the animal frame. It is the centre of life. It provides for all the body. It governs all the body.

I. Now Moses, the Lawgiver, in this farewell address, assures the children of Israel that if, after their settlement in the land of Canaan, they shall fear God, and love Him, and keep His commandments, He 'will set the Hebrew nation on high above all nations of the earth'. Israel, so long as he is loyal to Jehovah, shall be 'the head, and not the tail'; he shall be 'above only, and not beneath'. That is to say, he shall be the leader of the Gentile nations, and not their subject or follower. But Moses tells them also, on the other hand, that should they prove unfaithful and disobedient, they must be prepared for an opposite destiny. In that case, 'the stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him; he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail' (verses 43, 44).

Which of these two destinies did the Hebrew nation choose? For a short season it looked as if that nation was really to become 'the head'. God raised up King David to sit upon a glorious throne. The reign of his son was the Hebrew golden age; in Solomon's time 'Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude'; the Queen of Sheba came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear his wisdom; and he built a great Temple to the glory of the God of Israel. But, alas! the Hebrews did not continue faithful to the divine covenant. They cast God's law behind their backs. They worshipped idols, and persecuted the prophets, and killed the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, instead of being 'the head,' they have become 'the tail'. There was first the Assyrian captivity, then the Babylonish captivity, and at last the total dispersion, which continues to this day. The Jews have 'come down very low'; for more than eighteen hundred years they have been a nation without a national home.

Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,  
How shall ye flee away and be at rest!  
The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,  
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave!

II. But God is not the God of the Jews only; and so He makes precisely the same promise and threatening to the *Gentile peoples*. The leading nations of the world to-day are those which are the most Christian. What nation is 'the head' among the Powers of Europe? Surely we may answer, without any of the partiality of patriotism, that it is our own beloved country. Great Britain is the mother of Greater Britain, that family of strong young nations which have begun to possess the future of the world,—the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Cape Colony, and others.

And what nation is 'the tail' among the European peoples? Is it not that of Turkey—the one Mohammedan nation of the Continent? Turkey is really what Nicholas I. of Russia called it long years ago—'the Sick Man' among the Powers of Europe. The Turks are lazy, selfish, and cruel. The government of the Sublime Porte is bad—little better, indeed, in some departments, than a system of organised robbery. Ottoman law declares the slave-trade to be illegal, and at the same time allows it to be largely carried on. Turkey has 'come down very low'; it is 'the tail'. And we know who it is, according to the proverb, that 'takes the hindmost'.

III. We ought to remember, too, that what the Lawgiver says in this verse is true of *persons* as well as of peoples. A boy at school prefers, if it be possible, to be 'the head'—dux in his class, if he be fond of books; or captain of the eleven in the cricket club, if he be fond of sports. He tries to avoid having to confess that he is in any sense 'the tail'. We have all heard of the little fellow who, when asked day after day at home where he stood in the class, always answered that he was 'second dux,' until by and by his parents found out that there was only one other pupil besides himself in the class.

It is those boys and girls, and those men and women, that are conscientious and diligent and God-fearing, who gradually grow in influence, and come to be more and more looked up to by their fellows. When we read the lives of the godly men of the Bible, we find that the constant tendency of their goodness is to lift them upwards. We see it in Joseph, in David, in Daniel, in Mordecai.

The young people who are at present at school are just, as we say, 'beginning life'. The great question before each of them regarding the future is this—What will he do with it? Forty years hence, many of the present generation of school children will be dead; and of those who survive, some will be 'the head,' and others, alas! will be 'the tail'.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 234.

## THE SHAM ROCK AND THE REAL ROCK

(Object—*a Shamrock*). (Our Rock)

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 31.

I SUPPOSE that most boys and girls have at some time seen that graceful little leaf called 'The Shamrock'. It is often used as the National Emblem of Ireland.

The stories told about St. Patrick, and how he drove all snakes out of Ireland, are about as tall or idle as the silly snake stories told of Queensland.

Even if it be not strictly true, yet the legend of St. Patrick and the trefoil leaf or shamrock is both pretty and pointed.

Tradition says that in order to illustrate to his listeners the unity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, St. Patrick plucked the little green shamrock leaf and showed how that the three leaves were blended on one. Jesus who is represented as the centre leaf is sometimes likened also to a rock. 'He is a real rock.'

**I. Jesus is the Rock of Supply.**—Paul in one of his letters tells how the people of Israel in their wanderings were called to pass through difficult places. As they journeyed their needs were supplied. 'For they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them and that rock was Christ.'

Water from a rock is cool and refreshing. I remember once seeing these lines on a wayside spring:—

Weary traveller rest and drink,  
Then go thy way remembering still  
The wayside spring beneath the hill,  
A cup of water in His name.

**II. Jesus is the Rock of Strength.**—'He hath set my feet upon a rock.'

A little child playing on the seashore playfully remarked to his sister whose feet were sinking in the soft sand, 'Mary, *I can't sink*, for I'm now standing on a rock.'

**III. Jesus is the Rock of Shelter.**—'A great rock in a weary land.'

You have heard of safety found in the great Rock of Gibraltar. We cannot all find shelter there, but to Jesus *all* may go and abide in safety.

Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a shelter in the time of storm.—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 56.

### GOD OUR REFUGE

'The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'—DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 27.

As I have taken my text from the Bible, which is the Word of God, so I shall have much to say about God, who is our Father in heaven.

You all believe in God; you say a great deal about Him; you ask many questions about Him; and you pray to Him before you go to sleep at night.

**I. God is a Person.**—He thinks and feels and wills; He hears and sees and remembers. We cannot see Him or hear Him, yet we can see the things which He has made. And He has given us the Bible, and we may love Him as He loves us, and so we may know God by loving Him. When the snow falls and you run out in it, you leave footprints in the snow which you and others see. Those little footprints in the snow tell how large you are, which way you are going, whether you walk or run, what kind of a shoe you wear. Now God has left footprints which we can see, and which tell us much about Him, just as your

footprints in the snow tell us about you. The grass, the trees, the stars, the sun, the moon, all tell us of God, how great and wise He is.

**II. God Created all Things.**—It is true that the shoemaker made your shoes; the tailor or dress-maker or your mother made your clothes; the clock-maker made the clock that ticks so steadily; the cabinet-maker made the furniture; the carpenter built the house; but God made the leather, the wool, the wood, the world, the stars. He made man to be like Him; and so, as God makes things to be and grow, man makes what he can out of the things God prepares.

**III. God is Eternal.**—He never began to be and will never cease to be. We were born and we shall die. God was never born and will never die. He is without beginning or end of days. He is from everlasting to everlasting, eternal. He lives for ever. He is the eternal God, as our text says, and His arms are everlasting.

**IV. How Does God Look?**—We cannot tell, for we have never seen Him. True, He made us in His own likeness, not our bodies, but our souls. We can see our bodies, our hands, feet, head; but we cannot see the soul within our body, that thinks, feels, wills. No one has ever seen the soul of a man. We are like God in our souls, not in our bodies. Our fingers cannot think, but our souls can and do think. In soul we are like God. Yet since we have eyes, and arms, and feet, and a mouth, we speak of the eyes of the Lord, the arms of God, the mouth of God, because it helps us to understand God. But we must not think that God has a body such as we have. He is a spirit as our souls are spirits. We cannot tell how a spirit looks.

**V. God is Everywhere.**—We are in different seats, live in houses far apart, and cannot often see one another. God is everywhere. He sees us wherever we go. He sees in the night-time as well as in the daylight. Your parents are not with you always, and they cannot hear what you say and see what you do; but God is always with you, to hear and to see. Remember that God sees and hears you all the time, and be afraid to say or do anything wrong.

**VI. God is a Refuge for You.**—He loves you as your father does. If you are afraid of anything, you run to your father and he takes you in his arms to keep you from harm. So our text tells us that God, the eternal God that never dies, is your refuge, and that He will put His everlasting arms beneath you and keep you from all harm. When you are sick and weary, your father puts his strong arms underneath you and lifts you up and comforts you. So God comforts all that need and ask Him for comfort. Did you never sleep in your father's arms or in your mother's lap? How sweet to sleep in the arms of God, and rest there for ever! How many little lambs has Jesus carried in His bosom! How many has He borne into heaven in His loving arms! Let us flee to Him when we are sorry for sin and afraid, and He will forgive and comfort us.

VII. Shall we ever See God?—Yes, we shall see Him by and by, and we shall have to tell Him all we have ever said and done, the good and the bad alike. If we omit the bad and tell the good, He will know it. Yet He is our kind Father in heaven, who sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins, that He might forgive them. If we repent of sin, and turn

from it, He will forgive us our sins, and heaven shall be our home for ever.

There is a God, who made all things, who is a person as each one of us is a person, who is eternal, spiritual, everywhere present; who is a safe refuge for us all from sin and sorrow, and whom we shall see by and by. Let us prepare to meet God.—A. HASTING Ross, *Sermons for Children*, p. 10.



# JOSHUA

## STRENGTH AND COURAGE

'Be strong and of a good courage.'—JOSHUA I. 6.

ALTHOUGH the strength of active limbs and firm muscles and the courage which men share with the lower animals are not to be despised, but praised and sought after in their degree, yet it is to the nobler qualities the text chiefly refers, when it says, 'Be strong and of a good courage'.

**I. The Need of Strength and Courage.**—This word of good cheer was first spoken to Joshua, the brave leader of the army of Israel, when he was standing on the brink of Jordan and about to cross over and conquer Canaan. God gave it to him, and repeated it thrice over, so that he might never forget it. He did not get it only for himself. He circulated it through the whole army. It went like a watchword from mouth to mouth; and for years afterwards, in hours of peril, one soldier used to cry to another, 'Be strong and of a good courage'.

Joshua and his men needed it, or God would not have said it to him thrice so earnestly. Indeed, their need of it was very great. They had Canaan to conquer—its towns and cities to storm, its kings and princes to capture, and its tribes to subdue. Some of these were strong and warlike; some were giants; all were prepared to fight hard for their lives, their goods, and their families. Well might Joshua be afraid and feel himself weak as he faced such an enterprise. Therefore God came near and cheered him with the exhortation, 'Be strong and of a good courage'.

This word is sent to us too, because we also have a campaign before us; not one great battle only, but many battles. We have enemies to subdue that are strong, obstinate, and fighting for life. Do you know what they are? Have you commenced to fight them yet? Let me tell you when you will need to hear this cheering cry.

**1. In the hour of confession.**—Jesus calls upon every one of you to confess Him; that is, to take His side, and to let others know which side you are on. 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' 'Whosoever,' he says, 'shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.' You see how solemnly He demands this from you. If you do not confess Him on earth, He will not confess you on the last day. But it is no easy thing to do. There are bearded men who would kindle with rage if any one accused them of cowardice, but who are

afraid to confess Christ. There are hundreds of young men proud of their courage and strength, yet not strong and brave enough for this. It is often exceedingly difficult at school. Very likely some of you are hanging back from becoming Christians, just because you are afraid of the shame and opposition you might have to face among your companions if you became followers of Christ. I have heard a young man tell that he was brought to Christ when he was a boy at a public school. It became known among his school-fellows, and one day, when he entered the playground, he found them drawn up in a body to meet him; and as soon as they had him in their midst, they assailed him with laughter and cries of contempt. He was taken completely by surprise: his face burned with shame and anger, and the ground seemed to be reeling beneath his feet. It was a Monday morning, and the first exercise, after they had entered the school, was to repeat some verses of a Psalm. A pupil was called up to repeat them, and as the poor young Christian sat bewildered among his persecutors, the first words which fell on his ears were:—

And now, even at this present time,  
Mine head shall lifted be  
Above all those that are my foes,  
And round encompass me.

They seemed to be sent straight from heaven to him. They completely drove away his agitation, and made him calm and happy. He knew it was his Father saying to him, 'Be strong and of a good courage'; and sorely did he need this encouragement in his hour of confession.

**2. In the hour of temptation.**—We elder folk, to whom you are dear often look forward to a time when you will have to leave your homes, and go out into the tempting world. We look forward to it with fear, though you may seldom think of it yourselves. You are at present like a boat inside a harbour, riding in quiet water, or at most swayed from side to side by tiny wavelets. But soon the boat will have to put out from the harbour mouth, and enter the open sea beyond the protecting walls. It will have to encounter the wild storms and the rushing waves, and we tremble lest it should be wrecked. Many a brave vessel has been lost there, getting among the hidden reefs or being dashed on the cruel rocks. Even already you may know something of what it is to have to say No, when loved companions are urging you to do evil and your own inclinations are seconding their suggestions. There is many a hard struggle with temptation fought out before school is left behind. Yet the real struggle is still in front. You remember the three Hebrew

youths who were tempted to deny their consciences and their God. The whole world was against them. They were brought near to the fire. The furnace was heated seven times. So in all probability will the furnace of temptation be by and by heated for you. Will you quail and sink on your knees to worship the idol, or will you stand up and say No? Oh, may you hear in that hour the words of Divine encouragement ringing in your ears; for surely you will need them.

3. *In the hour of misfortune.*—Yours is the age of happiness. Most of you as yet know little of sorrow. Your fathers and mothers bear care and sorrow in place of you, and shield you from the cold world in their warm embrace. Long may your hearts be light and your voices ring with mirth; but the hour of misfortune can scarcely fail to come some day. It is the lot of all. It comes in a hundred different shapes. Think, as you read this, how vast is the united cry of pain ascending from earth to heaven. In hospitals, thousands are tossing on beds of anguish. In the homes of affliction, men and women and children are the prey of a hundred diseases, and those who stand around their beds in tears have scarcely less to suffer. How many of the aged, whose friends have died and whose business has failed them, have to look poverty in the face. And many hearts in every city are smarting with suffering far more hopeless than that which comes from pain of body or lightness of purse. You, too, may some time be thus labouring in the darkness with the tempestuous sea about you. So the disciples toiled in rowing that awful night on the Lake of Galilee, when they thought every moment their boat was to be engulfed and their lives lost. But across the waters, stepping from the ridge of one swelling wave to another, there came a radiant Figure; and a voice which rose above the storm reached their ears, repeating almost the very words of our text. Did they not need it? May you and I hear it too in our hour of suffering.

4. *In the hour of death.*—It is possible that some of us may to a very large extent escape misfortune. There are a favoured few on whom the diseases, the bereavements, the losses and crosses which crush others, do not fall. But there is one dread hour in front which none of us shall escape. Not the most fortunate can escape death. I hope it is far from most of you, though it comes to the young as well as to the old; and none of us can tell how soon it will come to us. Are you ready for that encounter? Can you look eternity in the face without flinching? Could you lie down to die, knowing that as you died so you would appear at the judgment-seat, without crying out for strength and courage greater than your own, and praying for a voice to whisper in your ear the words of Divine encouragement?

II. *The Source of Strength and Courage.*—I have already hinted where strength and courage for these hours of danger and conflict are to be found. It was told to Joshua in these words, following those of our text: 'Be not afraid, neither be thou dis-

mayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest'.

This is the secret. It is to have God ever near—a Friend unseen to others, but visible to us. Not long after this time Joshua had a great task on hand—the capture of the city of Jericho. He did not know how it was to be done; it seemed impossible; and he began to forget the watchword he had received on the bank of the Jordan. But one morning very early, before the camp about him was awake, he saw near him the figure of a man with a drawn sword in his hand. He went up to him and asked—'Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?' to which the stranger made answer—'Nay, but as captain of the Lord's host am I now come'. It was the angel of the Lord come to help Joshua. His fears vanished, Jericho was taken, and, accompanied by his heavenly friend, Joshua went forward, ever brave and strong, to his other conquests.

Christ with us—that will make us strong and courageous. He knows all the dangers that are before us. Nothing creates terror so much as what is unknown. We dread the darkness, because we cannot tell what it may hide. But Christ knows everything which the future can contain for us. Besides, he is almighty. Our enemies are strong—the wicked heart, the tempting world, the unknown future. But greater is He that is with us than they which are with them. No power can stand against us if he is on our side. And best of all, he loves us. You know how we trust those who love us. Some of you could not bear to go into a dark room alone; but if your father carried you into it in his arms, you would not be the least afraid. You would walk along the darkest road if your father held your hand. So, if we know that Christ loves us, and that he has all power, and knows all that is before us, what have we to fear?—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 141.

### STICK TO THE BOOK

'And then thou shalt have good success.'—JOSHUA I. 8.

*Object*—A pocket Bible.

'CARRY your Bible with you, take it wherever you go.' An excellent precept for personal practice, stick to the book. 'Meditate therein day and night, for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success.'

What do these wise words suggest to the young folk of to-day? Do they not seem to say:—

I. *Stick to the Book for Salvation.*—The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul (Psalm xix. 7). 'It is now sixty-two years since I became a Christian,' said a venerable old gentleman to a class of young men of which he was teacher. 'I have now passed the allotted span of life, but in looking backwards I can say with devout praise "not one of His good promises has ever failed me".'

Jesus seeks to save.

II. *Stick to the Book for Strength.*—In the first letter of John, chap. v., immediately after his reference to the little children and the fathers, the writer

says, 'I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you' (1 John ii. 14). The strong men are, and always have been, Bible men.

There is a picture in London, entitled 'The Death of Cromwell'. The whole room is dim with shadows. A Bible lies on the hero's breast, and there is a light flashing from it irradiating his face with a glory not of earth.

'A glory gilds the sacred page, majestic like the sun.'

III. **Stick to the Book for Success.**—Not ordinary success. No, the promise is qualified in the text, 'good success'.

There are few men of whom a mother felt more justly proud and to whom the Christian world owes a more lasting debt of gratitude than to the great John Kitto for that most useful exposition of Scripture, known as Kitto's Daily Readings. John Kitto made the book his own. Do likewise. 'Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.'—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 94.

## THE STORY OF ACHAN

JOSHUA VII. 1.

THE story of Achan is one of the saddest in the Bible. It is a story of evildoing, and of the sore death that fell on the evildoer. But it is not that which makes it the saddest. It is this, that the death which fell on the man who did the evil did not stop at him, but reached over and fell on his innocent children, and on the very lambs of his flock.

'They took Achan, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and all that he had; and all Israel stoned them with stones and burned them with fire.'

I am going to tell you of the great evil which Achan did, and of the evil thoughts which led him to do it, and of the terrible death which he and his had to die for his doing of it.

Achan was a farmer. He was not a poor man. He had oxen and asses and sheep, and he had sons and daughters to attend to them. And like the other farmers of Israel at that time, he was a soldier. And like every soldier, he was bound to be true to God, his great King. And with the other soldiers he had to fight in the battle against Jericho. The Lord gave them a great victory over Jericho. It was a city surrounded by walls. The walls fell at the sound of the trumpets of Israel. And all the city, and all its gold and its silver, and its brass and its iron, and the beautiful garments of its citizens, fell into the hands of Israel. Now before the battle the Lord said to the fighters, 'The gold and the silver, the brass and the iron, shall belong to Me, shall be wealth for Me, and everything else shall be destroyed'. So that if a soldier came on a beautiful garment or anything else that was beautiful it was to be destroyed. But if he came upon gold or silver it was to be given over to God.

As Achan was fighting in the streets and in the houses he came upon a heap of things rich and beautiful. There was a dress made in Babylon, the richest that could be made in those days, and there was a heap of silver and a wedge of gold. Up till that moment Achan was a brave fighter. He was doing the hard and difficult work of a soldier. But what he now saw made the sword arm drop to his side. He was alone. A moment had come to him when he had a more difficult battle to fight than that against Jericho: he had to fight against himself. But he did not fight this difficult battle. He saw before him, wholly within his reach, the glorious rich robes, the Babylonish garment, and the silver and the gold. It was his duty there and then to have taken them to his officer. But he did not take them to his officer. He kept looking at them. Perhaps he said within his heart, it can do no harm to look at them. But it was an evil heart which spoke in this way, and the evil heart deceived him. It said to him, No, there is no harm in a look, or in a second, or in a third look. And by and by he could do nothing else but look. He forgot his task as a soldier. He saw the rich spoils. He stood still where they lay, and still he looked.

But now a new thought came into his heart. His heart had just said to him, 'There is no harm in looking at the goodly things.' In the same heart now rose up the desire to have them for his own. And he gave way to this desire. In his look now there was the hunger of an evil wish. He coveted the silver and the gold that belonged to God, and the Babylonish garment, which he ought to have destroyed. Up till this moment he was innocent, or nearly innocent. But now he was reaching out his heart to things that did not belong to him. He coveted them. In the New Testament it is said that covetousness is idolatry; when an evil heart leads anyone to wish for himself what is not his own, it is like giving worship to a false god. And possibly, in the short, swift moments in which Achan did the evil deed, he still had time to admire, and in his own soul praise, the riches and the beauty of the spoils. It was an evil new step he was taking. But even yet, if he had remembered the true God, and that he was a soldier for the true God, he might have escaped the snare into which, as a silly bird, he was flying. But he put the thought of the real God away from him. For the moment the silver and the gold and the Babylonish garment, as they lay together in one heap, were his god. He hungered after them. All that was good and brave and upright in him bowed down before them. His evil thought was hastening to become an evil deed.

And at last it became the evil deed. He shut the eyes of his soul to God and honour and duty, and reached out his hands for the spoils. He took them. And only think what a distance and in how brief a time he had now travelled in sin in doing this! He was a thief now. It was no longer a look, a thought, a wish: it was a deed. He had done the evil. He



took the goodly things—the things that were not his own, but God's. Yet, perhaps, even then, the evil heart within went on deceiving him. Perhaps it said to him, as it has so often said to evildoers, 'You are not worse than others. Others, if they had this chance, would do as you desire to do. And it is only a fool who would throw such a chance away.' But whether the evil heart spoke to him in these very words or no, he took the splendid dress and the silver and the gold.

And last of all he hid them. Once more his evil heart deceived him. 'Hide them,' it said. 'Nobody knows—nobody has seen—nobody can ever know.' So he rushed by hidden ways, carrying the spoil out from the city, away to the camp, to his own tent. And there he dug a pit, and in that pit he put the things—the silver and the gold and the Babylonish garment. And there was a moment—one short moment—as he covered up the spoil with earth, when his heart had joy. Nobody had seen him. Nobody knew what he had done. The things were safe in his keeping. Alas! Somebody had seen him. One was looking on all the time he was hungering for the goodly things: somebody followed him from the city, along the hidden ways, and into his very tent. God had seen all. God knew the evil he had done.

And by the power of God all the hidden evil came up into the light. And the gold, and the silver, and the Babylonish garment were dug up and brought forth in the face of all the people of Israel. And Achan, the soldier that should have given up the spoil, the farmer that had oxen and asses and sheep of his own, and was not driven by poverty to steal—Achan, the father of gallant sons and daughters, whose honour and well-being he should have cared for—was brought forth to die.

But it is this that troubles me in telling the story. He was not brought forth alone. His sons and his daughters were at his side. They had done no part of the evil. They had not coveted what belonged to God. But all the same they had to die. It is this that makes the story one of the saddest in the Bible.

I have listened to people who, reading this story, have cried out against the Jews. 'So cruel,' they have said; 'so pitiless, so inhuman!' Yes, I used to think in that way. But it is long, long ago. I find that that old Jewish law by which the innocent children had to suffer with the guilty father is still the law of the loving Providence that is working good to us every day. If a father lowers himself to become a thief to-day, in this very land where so many kind hearts live, his children will suffer for his sin. They will not be put to death, as Achan's children were, but they will suffer in a way that is harder to bear than death.

It is not only children who suffer when parents do evil, but it is also, and oftener far, parents who suffer when children go wrong.

We cannot do evil that will hurt only ourselves. Every sin, every crime, reaches out and gathers others within its evil net. If we sin, we bring all who love

us, all who lean upon us, all whom we ought to honour, within the shadow and shame of what we have done.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 187.

### CHOOSE YOUR GOD

'And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve.'—JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

NOTICE how Joshua puts his case. The text is often quoted in a way different from that in which the speaker meant it. We often say, Choose you this day whom you will serve—meaning, Choose between God and idols; just as Elijah said, 'If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him'. But Joshua makes a different application. He supposes that the people had made up their minds to forsake the service of God. And then he says, Well, choose what idol you will have. As if a boy were to say to his mother, I am not going to live any more in your house, and she were to answer him, Very good, and where will you go? I knew a boy once that thought he would get a better home than his mother's house, and ran away. He passed through a number of strange adventures, but he came back again to his mother's door. Alas! many, many of those who go away from God never come back. And it is a very miserable lot that all choose who prefer anything else to God's love. Joshua meant that. He meant to say to the people that whatever god they might select, they would find that they had made a wretched exchange. I wish to show you the same truth.

Suppose, then, that you make up your minds to it, that you will not be religious, that you will not love God, and serve him, what will you do to be happy? What will you live for?

To enjoy myself, says one.

To get rich, says another.

To get a great name, says a third.

To have people love me, says a fourth.

Well, these are four idols—pleasure, riches, praise, friendship. Bring them forth and set them up, and let us question them and see what they can do for you. Here is, first of all—'Pleasure'.

It looks well. Let us hear what it promises to them that serve it.

Come with me, children, says pleasure, and live as you like. When you are young, take your fill of fun and play. As you grow older, sing, laugh, go after all sorts of amusements, be merry, and gratify all your desires. Be like Solomon, keep not yourselves back from anything that appears good to you. Live like the insect dancing in the sun, sporting from flower to flower?

That sounds well enough; such a life promises fairly for a fine summer day. When you are well, prosperous, young, a gay life looks a fine thing on the outside. But life is not always summer, and the night comes. Pleasures will not shut sickness out, nor will they always last. There are some pleasures that bring pain as their fruit, just as things standing in the sunshine throw from them a black shadow. They are like the smooth, beautiful serpent; they

carry a sting. Did you ever read of the bee in the fable that found a pot of honey ready made, and thought it would be fine to save all the trouble of flying about the meadows and gathering its sweet stores, little by little, out of the cups of flowers, and began to sip out of the dish. Then it went in and revelled in the sweets; but when it began to get tired and cloyed, it found, poor bee, that its wings were all clogged and would not open, nor could it drag its body out of the mass. So it died, buried in pleasure. There are many young people that find pleasure to be death to them. Besides, it is not so good as it looks, even while it lasts. Bits of stained glass will glow like jewels, but they are worth nothing after all. There are not more miserable persons than those who live for nothing but to enjoy themselves. Their days are just excitements and weariness. A child takes sweets—thinks it would like to live on them—that it would be fine to be always eating dainties. Give the child its desire, and it would soon become disgusted. Force it to eat nothing but sweets, and you would kill it. All the pleasures of sin are deadly, and all pleasures which are sought as our happiness are sweet in the mouth only.

Here is a second idol which many worship—'Wealth'.

That's a great god just now. Indeed, it has always been. It is wonderful what people do to get money—how much they value it, and are valued for it. Well, we shall suppose you get a great deal of it. Are you satisfied now? Does your wealth make you happy? Forget all the toil, moil, and worry that it cost you to get it. Forget all the trouble you have about keeping it. We will say nothing about these. But what can your riches do for you? They can buy you a fine house, they can load your table with delicacies, they can enable you to travel and see the world, they can bring summer friends around you, they can get you all worldly delights you have a mind to. But they cannot give you a quiet conscience. They cannot prevent sorrows. You may be sick, you may lose friends, you may sit at a desolate hearth. You will see others richer than yourself, you will meet with losses, you will be in fear that all you have will make itself wings and flee away. At all events you must leave it all some day. A nobleman was once showing a friend his fine estate, the beautiful prospect he had, the noble woods, the rich farms, the superb mansion. He was expecting to receive some compliment or congratulation, but his friend was a Christian, and he said, 'Ah, these are the things which make dying dismal!' Yes, they do, where there is no better estate ready to go to. You remember what Christ says about the rich man in the parable. He had got great harvest stores; and when he had hit on the device of building bigger barns to put his goods in, he said to himself, 'What a happy man am I! I have provision for years. I have nothing to do but to eat, and drink, and enjoy myself merrily.' But God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee'. When death

comes to a rich man, all his wealth will not bribe it away. Nor is this all. For not only is wealth sure to be taken away, but God will ask its owner to give account of how he used it. The more he had, the heavier the account. What James says of gold and silver ill-gotten, is true also of riches ill-spent. 'The rust of them will eat your flesh,' he says, 'as it were fire.' What is the name we give to a man who hoards his money, and makes it his all? We call him a miser. Now, miser is a Latin word, just meaning miserable. A miser is a wretch. Put away, then, the golden idol. You must surely have a better trust, and a better portion than that.

Some of you think, perhaps, that here is a better. Your idol is—'Praise'. This is a fine-looking idol indeed. If you gave it a shape, it should have wings—with a pen in its hand to write your name in the rolls of honour, and a trumpet to sound it all abroad. Some such figures of fame have often been drawn. Praise has great charms for young people. And so, some of you may be saying, I will be clever, I will write a book, or find out some grand invention, and be known all the world over. I will be a fine singer, and draw great multitudes to my concerts. Or I will be a great lecturer or preacher, and crowds will come to hear me, and go away applauding me. Or I will be very learned, and people will wonder at me when I am living, and they will write my life after I am gone, or perhaps give me a monument. Yes, says fame, I will grave your name on the stone, and I will blow my trumpet loud over your grave. Ah, that's it, over your grave! Will you hear it then? Will your dust sleep the sweeter for the sound? Will that fame help you when the day comes for judging the world, and when Christ's approval will be the only praise worth having? If Jesus should say at last, 'I know you not,' of what use will it be to you that thousands of men knew and praised you? Suppose a man standing on the sea-shore in a fearful storm and trying to speak louder than the waves, would you not think him mad? Men's praise can do far less against God's condemnation than a child's voice against the thunder. Besides, even here, praise is not substantial or satisfying. Could your body live on praise? As little can your soul. And if you should get renown by wrong deeds, it will wither even on earth. At the bar of God it will be a heavy curse.

The fourth idol we supposed some one to choose is—'Affection'. You who make choice of this wish your father's and mother's love. You desire to be happy in the fond regard of brothers and sisters. And you would like to have many friends. You would be happy pleasing them. You would be rich by winning hearts. Now, this in itself is beautiful. I say nothing against it. There is something here which will disappoint far less than pleasure, or riches, or praise. But earthly friends must die. Their love is a flower, however sweet, that must wither. Then earthly friends are not perfect. And the best of them must not take the place of God. What would you

think of a boy at school that would be at pains to please and gain the hearts of all his classmates, but never mind his teacher's approval? Or what of a little girl that liked to have the warm affection of brothers and sisters, but was quite careless about her mother's love? When Moses brought down the two tables of stone from Mount Sinai, what would you have thought of the Israelites if they had set to work to break the first table all into fragments, saying, It will do well enough if we keep the second? If you are at no pains to please God, how can you expect Him to take thought about pleasing you?

Now, if I should ask you again, Which idol will you choose—pleasure, riches, fame, friendship? I hope you are quite ready to say, None of them all. We need something better than them all. We will seek and serve God. That is the right choice; that is the choice to which Joshua wished to shut up the people he was speaking to. And to show you a little more how this is the wise and good choice, let me tell you one or two things about it:—

I. In God you have what nothing else can give. You can say of His favour three things that you cannot say of anything else. You cannot miss it, if you only seek it. You can never lose it. And it is everything you need. Can you say these things of money, or honour, or gay enjoyments?

II. In serving God you may have all the other portions too, as far as they are worth having. You may have pleasure. The world is full of pleasure for people who love God. It sings in the woods, it shines in the sky, it dances on the waves, it smiles in the faces of friends—it comes in at a thousand avenues. And deeper than all outward pleasures is the sense of peace with God, and the sweetness of talking with Him in the heart. If you read the fourth Psalm you will find something about this worth committing to memory. So you may have wealth, and it will be doubly valuable because God's blessing is with it, and you know how to do good with it. You cannot take money with you to heaven, but you can buy things with it that will meet you in heaven, and make you rich there. Jesus once spoke a singular word about this; do you know it? Find a passage about the 'mammon of unrighteousness,' and you have it. You may have praise too. The meek, obedient, holy child Jesus grew in favour with God and men. 'The memory of the just is blessed.' And choosing God you are sure of friendship and of love. Jesus will be your friend. He says, 'I love them that love Me'. Angels will love you—the good in heaven and on earth will love you. Your home will be in the world that is filled with love.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church*, p. 214.

#### CHOOSE WHOM YE WILL SERVE

'Choose this day whom ye will serve.'—JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

I AM going to begin this afternoon by speaking about a picture I saw some time ago, and I wish you could have seen it too. Let me tell you about it.

We are in a splendid temple in Rome, but, alas! it

is not a Christian temple, for we see on one side an image of the goddess Diana, in front of which on a stand or altar a fire is burning. Near the image stands a young girl with a very sad expression on her face, and near her are her relations—her father, mother, and sister; there her lover and there her friends. Besides these you see the priests of the temple, and a crowd of Roman people. What have they brought this girl here for? There is a look of anxious entreaty on the faces of her friends, as if they wanted her to make some serious choice, and yet their request seems very simple, all they want her to do is to throw a little of the incense which a priest is offering her into the fire which is burning in front of the image. Only a little incense, yes, but how much it means! It means either to keep or lose her friends, her lover, and her life. Shall she burn the handful of incense and choose Diana, this false goddess, and keep her friends and her life, or choose Christ and lose all the rest?

In those far-off days many girls and boys and men and women, if they chose Christ as their God and King, had to lose all they loved most on earth—and they did choose Him, and for His sake suffered imprisonment and a cruel death.

How glad we ought to be that we live in times when we can serve Christ without the fear of having to suffer such dreadful things!

But like the young girl, we all have to choose whom we will serve. On one side is ourselves, our own way, our own wills and desires, the way of the world and the way of Satan—on the other side is Christ—which shall we choose? He has chosen all of us, for when we were baptised He took us for His own children and brought us like lambs into the fold of the Church. And when we grew up, some of us at our confirmation, some perhaps before, although not in Church, chose Him as our Master; but others, although they belong to Him, do not serve Him, for they can't make up their minds to follow Him and walk in His footsteps.

And why is this? Because they think it is hard to serve Him; it means denying themselves, and giving up their own way, and having to say 'No' many times when it would be easier and pleasanter to say 'Yes'. That is quite true, but even in that case they need not be unhappy. What does S. Paul say? and you know he had to give up a great deal when he chose Christ, and had to suffer many hardships after he had chosen Him. Sometimes he was put in prison, at other times stoned and beaten, sometimes he suffered hunger and thirst, was laughed at and insulted, and called all kinds of hard names—and yet does he seem unhappy? No, not in the least; he always seems full of sweet content, and joy, and happiness. Do you hear what he is doing in the jail at Philippi? Listen, it is midnight, and instead of being asleep he is singing, and all the time the cruel stripes are on his back.

I don't ask you to choose Jesus Christ because those who serve Him here will reach heaven at last,



although that is quite true. I don't ask you to choose Him for fear lest you should be punished for turning away from Him, although that is quite true too. But I say, choose Christ because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To choose Him is to choose all that is honest, and good, and true, and gentle, and kind—because to choose Him is to choose One Who will help you to grow up into pure and good and noble men and women.

'We love Him because He first loved us,' do you hear that? Look at the Saviour hanging on the cross and say, 'I am going to choose Him to be my King and my Guide—He died for me, and I am going to live for Him'.

There are a great many men and women who have spoilt their lives and wrecked their hopes of happiness, and become miserable and wretched because they wouldn't choose. They meant to serve Christ, they knew His was the voice of truth, but they couldn't make up their minds to choose Him, and so gradually they have drifted into evil ways and formed bad habits, and are now walking along the broad road which leads to destruction. And, alas! perhaps some are saying to themselves, 'It is too late to turn back now'.

Let us be wise and choose—make up our minds once for all we will choose Christ to reign over us.

Look at that vessel there on the sea. How very strangely it is sailing! sometimes it goes a little one

way, then it goes for a while in another direction, and now it seems to be standing quite still. What is the reason of that? Why look! there is no one at the helm to guide it, and so at times the current takes it in one direction and then the wind takes it in another—it is simply at the mercy of the winds and waves. Now a boy or a girl who doesn't choose the right is just like that vessel, tossed here and there by every breath of fancy or desire.

We come across men at times who seem to have no will of their own—they can't make up their minds as to what they ought to do, and so are always asking the advice of others. It is bad enough when a man is always borrowing money from others, but it is much more disastrous when we have to borrow opinions from others and use them as if they were our own. We pity such people and call them weak, and are not surprised if they turn out badly.

There are only two ways—the way of life and the way of death—and if we don't deliberately choose the way of life, that is Christ, we shall find at last we have chosen, even without meaning it, the way of death.

This day. Yes, choose Christ to-day, whilst you are young. It is much easier to choose to-day than it will be to-morrow, and we are not sure that we shall be able to choose to-morrow—the time for choosing may then be over for us.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 69.

## JUDGES

### CRUELTY

'Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table.'—JUDGES 1. 7.

ADONI-BEZEK is not a very pretty name, and yet it was the name of a king. The meaning of it is *Lord of Bezek*. This cruel man was king of Bezek, a town which Ensebius, the old Church historian, tells us was seventeen miles east of Shechem.

The regions ruled over by the native princes, within the boundaries of Palestine, must have been very small, as this master of brutality had subdued seventy of them.

He was a great man among this crowd of little ones, and he was the head of the combined forces of the Canaanites and Perizzites, against whom the tribes of Judah and Simeon marched after the death of Joshua. Adoni-bezek's army was routed, and he was made a prisoner.

The victors treated him as he had treated others, according to the cruel custom of the times.

Did Adoni-bezek complain of this? By no means. He considered himself as an offender brought to justice, as he freely confesses: 'Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table'. Observe, also, the remark which he adds to this dreadful acknowledgment of guilt: 'As I have done, so God hath requited me'. He died not long afterwards at Jerusalem.

I ought, perhaps, to explain that Adoni-bezek's object in mutilating the seventy kings was to hinder them from going to war again. In these days of cork legs and arms, and other curious contrivances, the loss of a finger or a toe would not matter so much, but in early times it was quite effectual. A man who had lost his thumbs could not well handle the bow or spear; nor could he march forth, steadily and firmly, as a military leader, without his big toes.

Although Adoni-bezek apologised for the cruelty which the Hebrews practised on him, we cannot. Now that the Lord Jesus Christ has come, and taught us the duties of gentleness, forgiveness, and mercy, His people see matters in a different light.

Sylla commanded the bones of Marius to be broken, his eyes to be pulled out, his hands to be cut off, and his body to be torn in pieces with pincers. Catiline enjoys the inglorious notoriety of having been the executioner.

You must not suppose, for a moment, that because the Gospel has taught people that it is wrong to be *cruel*, that therefore all Christians are *merciful*. This would be very far from the truth. Cruelty is

too common, even now, and children are guilty of it every day.

The Supreme Court at Athens punished a lad very severely for putting out the eyes of a poor bird. Our courts would have business enough, should they attempt to measure out equal justice in our day.

Once upon a time, in Finland, a dog was run over by a carriage, and, in its crippled condition, crawled to the door of a tanner. His thoughtless son first threw stones at the poor creature, and then poured a vessel of boiling water over it. One of the neighbours saw this diabolical act, and told his associates, who agreed that the boy should be kept in prison until the next market-day, and then be dealt with as he deserved. At the time appointed he was led forth, in the presence of a crowd of people, and the officer of justice read his sentence in these words: 'Inhuman young man, because you did not help an animal which implored your assistance by its cries, and which derived its being from the same God who gave you life; because you added to the tortures of the agonised beast, and then killed it—the Council of this city have condemned you to receive fifty stripes, and to wear on your breast the name you deserve'. So saying, the officer hung a black board around his neck, with this inscription, 'A savage and inhuman young man,' and, after having given him twenty-five good hard blows, he thus went on: 'You have now felt a very small degree of the pain with which you tortured a helpless animal in its hour of death. As you wish for mercy from that God who created all that live, learn to be more humane in future.'

The officer then executed the remainder of the sentence, and let the young man depart.

We have no court like that at Athens, and no magistrate to do what was done in Finland, but there is a Court and a Magistrate which do take some notice of cruel deeds. I need not say that this Magistrate is God. His tender mercies know no bounds, and He hears the young ravens that cry unto Him. 'With the same measure that ye mete, shall it be measured to you again,' is the rule which our blessed Lord lays down.

Some years ago several cruel boys and girls fastened a bullock's horn to the tail of a dog, and, turning him loose, followed him with brutal exultations. The affrighted animal ran down a narrow road, and went on as fast as possible, until he met a cart loaded with coal, drawn by two horses. The driver was seated on the shafts; and before he had time to look about him, the horses took the alarm and ran off, throwing the man to the ground with such violence that he was almost instantly killed. When the

thoughtless boys and girls came up, thinking only of the rare sport of tormenting the dog, they saw the dead body lying in the road. You can imagine their feelings when I tell you that it was their own brother who had been killed.

There are different degrees of cruelty, but he who is cruel in little things is in a fair way to become cruel in great ones. The boy who, out of mischief, bends up a pin, and puts it slyly on the bench, that he may have the pleasure of seeing his unsuspecting companion sit down upon it, has only to let this spirit of cruelty grow in him, and there is no telling what he will not be willing to do by the time he has become a man. Some of you have heard the story of Uncle Toby and the fly, but it is well worth telling many times. His kindly heart would not permit him to be cruel to anything.

One day he had been very much worried at dinner by a great, overgrown fly, and at last he succeeded in catching him. Uncle Toby went to the window, and raising the sash said to the buzzing creature, which was by this time pretty well frightened, 'I'll not hurt thee, no, not a hair of thy head. Get thee gone. Why should I hurt thee? This world is surely wide enough to hold both thee and me!' Would you have been as kind and tender-hearted?

And now, if you forget all the stories I have told you, remember this: *God will love no one who is cruel.*—J. N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 173.

#### SELF-CONTROL

'So he brought down the people unto the water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, lifting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: let all the other people go, every man unto his place.'—JUDGES VII. 5-7.

EVEN though an angel out of heaven should tell you that God is jealously and selfishly set on his own glory, and on giving as little credit to men as He can, *do not believe him*. It is not true. It is shamefully untrue. It is a mere libel on our Father in heaven. For the glory of God is His goodness; and He is never so happy as when He is doing us good. It was *because He wanted to do good* to the Children of Israel, that he made it plain to them that it was He who had saved them, and not they themselves.

Suppose they had defeated that great Arab host, which was like the locusts for multitude, purely by their own valour and skill, and had gone about puffed up and bragging of their own great deeds, would that have been good for them? Was it not infinitely more for their good to learn that God was with them and for them, that He loved them and would always save them from their foes if they took His advice; that He was their true Lord and King, and that they needed no other, because no other either could or would do half as much for them as He would do?

This was the lesson He tried to teach them when He saved them by the three hundred. And, again, the end justified the means. For Gideon did both learn and teach this lesson. Though it was so evidently God who had saved the men of Israel, and had proved Himself to be their Lord by showing Himself to be their Minister, they were foolish enough to give most of the credit of their salvation to Gideon. But when they came to Gideon, and asked him to rule over them because he had delivered them out of the hand of Midian, Gideon laughed at them. He would not hear of their request. It was *God* who had saved them, he said; and therefore it was God alone who should rule over them; for would they not want saving again? and who could save them but God only?

This, then, is the story of Gideon; and this is the moral of the story—that God wants to rule over us only that He may save us; or, to put it in another way: God wants us to know that it is He who *has* saved us, in order to assure us that He is always with us and for us, and that He will go on serving us and saving us to the end.

I doubt, indeed, whether there is any one lesson you so much need to learn as that of self-rule, any habit which you so much need to form as that of self-control—the lesson taught, the habit illustrated, by the story of the three hundred. *They felt, I suppose, that there were other and better things than the gratification of appetite, even when appetite was most craving and imperative. They felt that, while gratifying an appetite, they might lose life itself, or all that made life worth having. And, hence, they controlled their thirst, or their craving to indulge it, innocent as that craving was in itself, and lawful and right as it would have been to indulge it had the time been favourable to indulgence. And it is of the very first importance that you should share that feeling, and refuse to gratify cravings, appetites, desires, which may be quite natural and innocent in themselves, but which, nevertheless, it may be wrong of you to indulge, or wrong to indulge to the full.*

The great difficulty is to make you sensible of your danger—to get you to believe that you must control the most natural and healthy cravings *on peril of your life*. You are like the comrades of the brave three hundred. You see no ambush, you suspect no danger, and cannot understand why, when you are so thirsty, you should not fling yourselves on your faces and drink of the cool water as hard as you like. You can easily understand, indeed, that the poor neglected children you meet in the streets, or see in the workhouse, may eat or drink too much when they get a chance, or be too eager for gain if they see a chance of getting gain, or rush at any pleasure which comes in their way. But you, who have been brought up in pious comfortable homes, trained in good habits, provided with all you need—what danger can there be for you?

Alas! there is much danger, constant danger,



terrible danger, even for you. And I want to convince you of it; for how can I expect that you will be on your guard against it unless you believe that it exists?

Self-control is required at every moment, along the whole range of your habits, and through the whole course of your life. From our present point of view, it may be just as wrong to drink too much water as to drink too much wine; just as wrong to eat too much wholesome food as to eat food which is unwholesome; just as wrong to give too much time to play, and to be too fond of it, as not to play at all; just as wrong to be too eager to make money, and to get on in the world, as to be too lazy to do any work well. Of course, it is quite right to drink when you are thirsty, and to eat when you are hungry, and to play when your work is done, and to be diligent in business when you have business to do. It is only the *too much* against which you need to be on your guard. It is only against being too hotly set on any object that we warn you. It is only the habit of controlling cravings and desires which are likely to run away with you that we invite and beseech you to form, which we say you *must* form if you would not injure your health, your reputation, your usefulness.

Our counsel to you is: Hold yourselves well in hand. Do not suffer any appetite of the body, or any ambition of the mind, to master you. Be masters of yourselves, of all your appetites and of all your desires. Sip the water, or the wine, of life, like the three hundred. Lap at it as you go on your way, and keep a good look-out for the enemies that may lurk in it or around it. But do not, like their rejected comrades, fling yourselves on your knees to it, and drink as if your only business in the world was to get your fill of pleasure, or of gain, and to gratify your appetites as they rise within you.

Would you like to have a pattern, an example of what you ought to be and do in order to attain this habit of self-control? You may find it in Jesus Christ our Lord—find it most of all in his meekness and gentleness. For it is by 'the meekness and the gentleness of Christ,' that St. Paul beseeches us to subdue all fleshly cravings, and to cast down all the 'imaginings' which exalt themselves against God and against our true life in Him.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 148.

### PITCHERS AND LIGHTS

JUDGES VII. 14-23.

In the wonderful chapter in Judges which tells the story of Gideon's victory there are so many lessons that we might read it every Sunday for a month, and find new lessons each day. It is only one of these lessons I am going to bring out for you at present. And I will call it the lesson of the pitchers and the lights.

It is an old story now. The thing it tells of happened more than three thousand years ago—long before Elijah's time, before King David's time, a

hundred years even before Samson's time. And that was a very sad time for the children of Israel. Moses and Joshua had been dead more than two hundred years. And they had no prophet, or king, or great captain to help them. They were like sheep without a shepherd.

It was just then, when they had no king, that the wicked nations of Midian and Amalek said to each other, 'Come, they have no king in Israel, nor king's soldiers, let us go in and seize their land'. And they came—a great army, like locusts in number and cruelty—and filled the whole rich plain of the river Jordan, and spoiled the people of their tents, and their cattle, and their food. The shepherds and farmers fled to the hills. And there, away in hidden places, which the robbers could not reach, they sowed their wheat and their barley, and fed the flocks they had saved.

But the good Lord took pity on His poor Israelites. And He sent an angel to say that He would raise up a captain to fight for them. And then one of the strangest things happened. The man God chose to be their captain was not a soldier at all, but simply a good, pious farmer, who, since his boyhood, had worked among the wheat-fields of the hills for his father, and had kept love for God in his heart. The Lord chose this man, Gideon, the son of Joash, and said to him, 'Be thou captain under Me in this war'.

Thirty thousand people flocked to Gideon, to be soldiers under him, when they heard the news. And then another strange thing took place. The Lord said to Gideon, 'Thirty thousand soldiers are too many for the battle which thou must fight'. So twenty thousand were sent home. But the Lord said again: 'Ten thousand also are too many. Bring them down to this brook, and bid every man of them drink.' And when they were there, the most part of them, nine thousand seven hundred of them, went down on their knees, put their lips to the water, and that way drank. But three hundred made a cup of their hands and raised the water to their lips, and in that way drank. Then the Lord said: 'By the three hundred that lapped the water from their hands I will have this battle fought'. So all the rest went back to their hiding-places among the hills.

And now took place the strangest thing of all. The Lord commanded Gideon to divide the three hundred into three companies, and give each man a ram's-horn, an earthen pitcher, and a light hidden in the pitcher. He was to go into the battle at midnight with these. And when every man had got his horn and his pitcher and light, on a certain night Gideon gave the word. And the three companies moved down in silence from the hills to where the tents of Midian and Amalek covered the plain. Silent, unseen, moved the three hundred, nearer and nearer to the sleeping hosts. Then Gideon planted his men all round the camp. Then he blew a great blast on his own horn, and cried, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!' Then every man did as his

captain had done, blew a loud blast on his horn and raised the same shout. And then they all broke their pitchers and let the lights flash forth. And at the sound of the shouting and of the horns the robber-army started from its sleep. The soldiers heard the sudden sounds, and, looking out, saw the flashing lights. All round and round the camp they saw lights moving through the darkness; they heard horns blowing. The air was filled with noises, with the shouts of mighty voices, saying, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!' Sudden fear took hold of them. They rushed out of their tents. From tent to tent, over the whole camp, rushed forth the terror-stricken soldiers into the darkness, until at last the whole army was in flight. And then Gideon and his men pursued. And then came down from their hiding-places on every side other fighters of Israel to help. And there was a great pursuing of the robbers, and some were killed, and the rest were utterly chased out of the land; and the land was cleared of its foes.

That is the story of the wonderful victory which this great hero gained. He went down into the battle with only three hundred men, with only trumpets, pitchers, and lights for weapons, and the mighty hosts of Midian and Amalek, thousands upon thousands, fled before him and were driven from the land.

More than a thousand years after, when the story of this victory had come to be a common lesson in the houses and schools of the Jews, it was read in the hearing of a little boy named Saul who lived in the once famous city of Tarsus. And it made a great impression on him, and went deep into his heart. And long years after, when he was an old man, and the Apostle Paul, he remembered it. And once, when he was in the city of Philippi, and writing a letter to the Corinthians, he put what he had learned from that story into a letter in these words—'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure (this treasure of light) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.'

You see the old Apostle has remembered all the story—the pitchers, the out-flashing of the lights at night, and the excellent power that gained the victory. Especially he remembered this—it was this that had gone most deeply into his spirit—that the power in all battles for God must be the power of God. Paul is writing of the sufferings which he and his fellow-workers had to endure. He and they seem no better in the eyes of Paul than earthen pitchers—poor, weak, fragile creatures, that any blow might break, who one day should certainly be broken. But poor and fragile though they be they are vessels carrying a Divine light, a life kindled by God, and a power which cannot be destroyed, which, even if those who carry it were broken to pieces and lying in the dust, should still shine forth and win battles for God.

And just that is the lesson I wish to draw from this old story of Gideon's pitchers. As Paul remembers it, and translates it into Christian truth for us, it becomes part of the good news of Christ. It brings the happy assurance to every heart who hears it, that even a child may be a vessel to carry the power of God. Weak people, little people, fragile people—God uses them all—God can fill the weakest and the most fragile with strength for His work. He asks only that the heart shall receive His life. The outside may be no better than earthenware, but inside there will be an excellent light and power of God.

And that is the New Testament picture of all Christians, whether young and feeble, or old and strong. They are all, in themselves, but vessels—and vessels neither of gold nor silver, but of clay—poor fragile things, just like earthen pitchers. We should be worthless, only God puts His life into our hearts. We should be uncomely, only God puts His beauty into our life. And we should be utterly feeble, and unable to fight one battle for truth or righteousness, only God puts His Spirit into ours. And when the power of that comes upon us, we become strong like Gideon.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 257.

#### THE THORN KING

'And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them. Harken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint: a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.—JUDGES IX. 7-15.

MANY lessons might be drawn from this parable, which has more than a mere literary or historical interest, and which carries its truth for this age no less than for the old and stormy time which gave it birth. Of these lessons *three* seem to be clearly marked and worthy of our serious thought.

The first is the lesson of **Contentment in our own Sphere of Service**. Gideon was wise and right in his refusal to accept the position of king. The people had the best of kings. Like many people of modern times, they laid their disasters to their form of government, and clamoured for a change when, in fact, the disasters arose from their own want of loyalty to the existing form. God had numerous uses for wise and good men, without making them kings. Gideon had no need to be a king in order to serve his country. He could serve it far better in the position in which God had placed him, and he had the grace to perceive this, and, like the olive tree, to

refuse to be torn up from the soil in which he was honouring God and serving men, and commit himself to the freaks of the popular will. Hence he said to the people, 'You will not be without government, though I refuse to be your king. The Lord will rule over you, and each of you can betake himself to serving God in his place, and, by your virtue and loyalty to Him, make the land prosperous and happy.'

Jotham's parable carried the same thought. The good trees perceived that ruling meant uprooting. They were not disposed to be torn up from the soil where their deep rooting enabled them to render such excellent service in order to go and 'wave about over the trees,' for such is the literal meaning of the words 'to be promoted over'. And both Gideon's words and the words of Jotham state a great, an eternal truth, that position carries with it success and usefulness only as it is firmly rooted in obedience to God. The only sure warrant of success which any man in any place has, is—'God put me here'. And so many positions become altars on which their occupants are sacrificed, because their occupants are bramble-men, there by their own self-seeking, and for the sake of the position, and not to do the will of God. Fire comes out of the coveted place and destroys the bramble-man as it did Abimelech.

The thing which every man ought first to desire in this world is *usefulness*. *Service* is a good man's law of life; and the only authority and prominence which are worth having at all are won by a man's demonstrating his power for superior usefulness. Hence our Lord says, 'He that will be chief among you let him be your servant'. The mastery which He himself exercises over the lives of men, lies in the fact that He is the world's supreme benefactor. 'He took on Him the form of a servant, therefore God hath highly exalted Him and hath given Him a name which is above every name.' There are high places which must be filled, and God has the right men to put into them; but one of the greatest and most common mistakes is the thought that usefulness is dependent on position; whereas the exact reverse is the case—that true position is dependent on usefulness.

Therefore the parable rebukes the almost universal restlessness and craving for a higher and more commanding place. The good trees wisely saw that in the quiet bringing forth of their oil and wine and fruit, in the silent ministry of their shadow to the sun-stricken and weary, they were doing good service to God and man, and they were content with this. It was the worthless thorn-bush which was eager to leave its place and accept the appearance of honour.

But let us now turn to the second lesson of the fable—**The Sin of Refusing God's Appointment to a Higher Place.** Jotham's story turned upon the choice of a bad king by bad men. The olive and the vine were right in refusing to leave their places at the call of the foolish trees and in order to serve their own selfish pride. But his words had no bear-

ing upon a *Divinely established* monarchy, such as came later. This fable is not, as some have explained, an inspired utterance against monarchy in general. There came a time when God appointed a king, and *then* it was not for Saul nor for David to plead their different callings as excuses for refusing His appointment. Whatever sweetness or fruitfulness or power of shelter lay in them must be put at the service of Israel.

Something is and must be king over each of us. Something will say 'must' to us: and remember that the alternative of the rule of the best is the rule of sting and fire. Men were made for no rule worse than *God's*, and whatever else usurps the throne carries disaster within it. There is a too common sentiment that one may refuse the absolute law of God as embodied in the Gospel of Christ, and yet enjoy all the *blessings* of His sovereignty, along with whatever he may pick and choose out of the world. Jotham's bramble tells us better than that: 'If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow'. When you choose a ruler you choose an *absolute* ruler. 'To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.' And what you choose to *obey* you must also choose to *trust*. You cannot choose the devil for *master* and God for *protector*. If the bramble is king, you must find shelter in the shadow of the bramble. If the bramble is fit to rule you, he ought to be fit to defend and comfort you; and if you take the bramble at all, you must take him *entire*—thorns, fire, and all. The moral choice of men is not only between two *masters*, but between two *economies*, and the economy goes with the master.—MARVIN R. VINCENT, *Sermons to Young Persons*, p. 1.

### CHRISTMAS EVE

'Teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.'

—JUDGES XIII. 8.

THAT is a kind thing to ask, is it not? 'What shall we do to the child that shall be born?' It would never do to put off thinking about him, and planning for him, and getting things ready for him, until he had come. It would be too late then—would look as if he was not wanted—wasn't welcome—and he might go away again, and never, never come back. So if he was really wanted and was really welcome, dear little fellow, there was only one way of showing it, and that was by having everything ready for him—something to eat, and something to wear, and a big, big heart to love him.

You are so old now, you little children are, and you have had so many things to think about since, and laugh over and cry over, that I daresay you have quite forgot about that beautiful morning when you first lifted the latch and came in. You rather liked the look of things then, didn't you? I am sure you did, for you just took off your wings and made up



your mind to stay, as you have remained ever since which is very good of you!

What was it that pleased you then? I know it was to find that father and mother had been thinking about you before you lifted the latch and came in, and when you said, 'Good morning,' they said, 'Good morning' too; and it was a good morning, for their love was waiting for you, aired and warmed, and quite ready. They loved you, you see, before you loved them; they got the start, for God had taught them what to do to the child that should be born.

But now, what about Jesus? Christmas Day will soon be here, and you will be all singing, 'Unto us a child is born'; 'Glory to the new-born King'. That will be nice—very, very nice—but mustn't we do more than that? Mustn't we get ready for His coming? It would never do for Jesus to come and then find that we hadn't been expecting Him, hadn't been waiting for Him, hadn't been getting things ready for Him. That would look as if we really didn't want Him, and He might go away again; and then we would be without Jesus, and that is the saddest thing in all the world—to be without Jesus. So what shall we do for the child that shall be born?

There's one thing we can do—yes, the tiniest among you can do it. We can get a little room ready for Him. Do you know where that room is? Ah, there

is only one room that Jesus will stay in, and that room is in your heart. Yes, my dear little one, if you make room in your heart for Jesus He will come and stay there. But He won't stay anywhere else. He *visits* other places, but He only stays in the heart that makes room for Him.

So get ready a place for the child that shall be born. Put out of the heart everything He would not like to see—bad thoughts, naughty tempers, unkind words, and everything that grumbles or grudges. If He sees these there He will see at once that He isn't wanted, and He won't come in. So put all that away; get the heart ready, bring in kindness and sweet thoughts and love—oh, there must be love—big love, true love, warm, warm love for Him. You wouldn't have stayed if there hadn't been love in the house before you, and no more can He. So get the heart ready for the child that shall be born, and let it be made warm and bright and pleasant with love. And then *pray*—pray for Him to come, tell Him there is room in your heart for Him. Pray to Him, pray to Him to come into your heart, for when He hears you praying for Him He knows He is welcome, and He will come. Don't leave Jesus out in the cold; get your hearts ready for the child that shall be born.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pulpit*, p. 264.

# RUTH

## RUTH AND NAOMI

'Whither thou goest I will go.'—RUTH I. 16.

I THINK that these words express the relationship that ought to exist between the young and the old. The one who uttered these words was named 'Ruth,' which translated probably means 'Rose'—a beautiful name, borne, in this case, by a woman of beautiful character. One thing that was very beautiful about Ruth was that—

1. She was very closely attached to her aged mother-in-law who had really become to her a mother, through her kindness. A very strong love seemed to unite these two together. This was all the more striking, because they did not belong to the same race. Naomi was a Jewess, Ruth was a Moabitess. The sons of Naomi had married two daughters of Moab; and one might have expected that some sorrow would have resulted from that. Not only did they belong to two different races, at a time when it was not lawful for a Jew to marry a Moabitess; but more than that, though the Moabites were the descendants of Lot—Abraham's nephew—they had gone back to idolatry; it was, therefore, very wrong for a worshipper of the true God to marry an idolatress.

But, notwithstanding all this, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth, and, indeed, her other daughter-in-law Orpah, loved each other dearly. They had lived long enough together to know and to love each other. Ruth, therefore, felt now that if there was any one on the face of the earth to whom she ought to cling, that one was Naomi; and all the more because Naomi was getting old, and because she and Ruth had passed through the same sorrows. Naomi had lost her husband; Ruth, too, had lost hers; who was also Naomi's son. They had wept together; they knew what it was to enter into each other's griefs. Now there is nothing that brings people together like that which they have experienced in common. One great thing to bring little children together is a common joy—a joy in which all can share. That is one reason why play should be encouraged; it is such a uniting force. When half a dozen children join in the same game, and share the same joy, they are drawn to each other. Of course, there are some children who can be disagreeable anywhere, even in play; but happily they are exceptions, and I am not speaking about them. As a rule, if a child never likes play, he is never very loving toward other children; but if he likes play, he is drawn into sympathy with them, just because they have something in common.

Now, if that be true of joy, it is still more true of

sorrow, though, I have no doubt, you do not know that yet. There is nothing that brings us together like a common sorrow. There are, perhaps, some little orphans who know what it means. Some brothers and sisters here this morning have possibly lost father or mother, or both. They never knew how much they loved one another till they shared that bitter grief. Till they wept together over the same loss, they never thought of the love they had for each other; and that loss has only brought them closer to each other. It was just so with Ruth and Naomi. They had had the same sorrow, the same losses, and so they had been drawn very closely together.

But now Naomi wanted to go back to her own country. That is one of the strongest attractions we have, after all. You will never learn how much you love England till you get out of it. You never know with what affection you think of your own people till you get away from them. Naomi had been away from Bethlehem and the people she loved for ten years. Now that she had lost her noble husband and her brave sons, she longed to see Bethlehem once more! She wanted to see some of the old friends she knew in happier days. Many, she knew, she would never see again. Death makes a great many gaps in ten years. There were many vacant chairs and darkened homes in Bethlehem. Well, Naomi longed to see other widowed and childless mothers. She would sympathise with her old friends in their sorrow, and they with her in her grief. And she would gladly see others who would be sure to give her a welcome back to the dear old place. Thus, no doubt, the aged Naomi thought, and I suspect that she said as much to Ruth and Orpah; she therefore resolved to return.

Now, this was Ruth's opportunity. She felt that she could not let her go alone; she had always been so kind and loving—a second mother—to her, and in their great sorrows they had understood one another so thoroughly. Besides, she could never look at Naomi without thinking of her dear husband. She was his mother, and he was, no doubt, the good man he was largely through his mother's example. Thus Ruth felt that, whatever might happen, she must cling to Naomi. Orpah, indeed, felt the same, only that Naomi succeeded in persuading Orpah to return. I have not a word to say against Orpah; she was a loving genial woman, only Ruth was more determined than she was. Ruth persisted in saying, 'Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go'.

Now, all this is very charming, because Ruth could

have got on far better than her mother-in-law could. Naomi was getting old, Ruth was young. Ruth, too, was among her people, and, probably, surrounded by friends, yet she could not think of letting Naomi go alone, and so she went with her. But then there is another fact stated—

**II. Ruth accepted Naomi as her Guide.**—‘Where thou goest, I will go.’ In other words, ‘I trust in your judgment. If you want to go back to your own country, I know it must be right. I have never found you wrong in your judgment; you have had more experience than I, and are far wiser than I am. One thing I know, and that is, I cannot leave you. Where you go I will go.’ Now that is just the language of a child. Ruth was not a child, but she was a child as compared with Naomi, and so she gave the preference to one older and more experienced than herself. We always think well of those who pay deference to their seniors, especially if these are parents or guardians or teachers. Ruth did not hold to her preferences and opinions doggedly when she knew that Naomi wanted to return to her own country and kindred.

Now I wish you children would just learn that one lesson. Be more ready than you are to follow the

leading of those who are older than you. Those who have watched, and are watching over you, are, as a rule, wiser than you are; and, if you cannot find a reason for everything they do, you should be ready to believe that your father would not be likely to do that, or your mother this, unless they had some reason for it. Hence it is the duty of the child to follow.

Thus Ruth followed Naomi because she knew she was a godly woman; and to imitate the godly is always safe. They leave us an example that we should follow them. Christ, above all, has left us an example that we should follow His steps; but so also, in a measure, does every saint. Are there children here who have godly fathers and mothers? Moses delighted to speak of the true God by the name of ‘My father’s God’. That is what we parents long for more than anything—that our children should worship our God; and that somehow each should associate that God with us, and say, ‘I do not wish to worship another than my father’s or my mother’s God’. Oh, what a help it is to have a father or mother, or still better both, worshipping the true God!—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women and Children* (6th Series), p. 160



# I SAMUEL

## THE CHILD OF PRAYER

I SAMUEL I-III.

THE Bible reminds me of a spring on a mountain side. That fountain has been flowing for thousands and thousands of years. It is as old as the old grey rocks in whose cool shade it wells up. Yet the water is always fresh, always flowing. So the Bible histories, though written thousands of years ago, never seem to grow old. Often as we have heard or read them, we can always find in them something new.

Almost every child who knows any Bible stories knows the story of the Child Samuel, whom the Lord called to be a prophet when he was but a little boy, and who grew up to be one of the wisest and best men who have ever lived. You know the story, do you not? Well, let us have a talk about it. Perhaps we shall find out some things you have not thought of before.

I. The first thing we are told concerning Samuel is that he was the **Child of Prayer**. His mother prayed that she might have a son, and God heard her prayer. Whoever might doubt whether God hears prayer, Samuel's parents could never doubt it. Samuel himself could never doubt it. His very name signifies, in Hebrew, '*Heard of God*,' that is, given by God in answer to prayer.

Among the ancient Hebrews it was counted a great calamity for married people to have no children. People thought it showed that God was displeased. Some think this was because every Jewish woman hoped she might become the mother of the Messiah, the promised Saviour. This, however, is not very likely. A simpler explanation is that as each family had its own portion of land to till, those families were best off which had a goodly number of strong, industrious sons to help the father in tilling the ground and tending the flock; and of active, dutiful daughters to share the housework with their mother. Those who had no children must hire servants or buy slaves to do their work. Another reason was that at any time all the men of suitable age might be called to fight in defence of their country and homes; and it was counted a great honour for a father to have many brave sons whom he could lead or send to battle. You remember that Jesse, David's father, had eight sons, three of whom were in Saul's army.

So when Hannah and her husband Elkanah had been married a good many years, and she had no child, they were deeply grieved and disappointed. More troubled, perhaps, Hannah was than she ought to have been; for when she went with her husband to worship in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, and ought ac-

ording to the law to have feasted upon the thank-offering, praising God for His goodness, 'she wept, and did not eat'. This one trouble swallowed up all her joy. But at any rate she did the best and wisest thing with her trouble,—what we should do with every trouble, great or small, in order that we may either be delivered from it, or have patience and courage given to bear it. She took it to God in prayer. 'She was in bitterness of soul, and wept sore, and she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts! if Thou wilt indeed look upon the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life.' No ear but God's could hear her prayer. 'She spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard.' But so earnest was she—her tears rolling down, and her frame trembling as her lips moved silently—that Eli the high priest was afraid she had been drinking too much of the wine of the sacrifice. 'And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.'

This is prayer indeed—*pouring out the soul before the Lord!* The most beautiful form of prayer would have been of no use just then to Hannah. Some forms of prayer are very excellent, and very useful in their way and place. If you put your heart and soul into a form of prayer, that is real prayer. If you are using your own words, but do not really mean what you say, that is not real prayer, but mere mockery. But after all, there is no prayer like that which comes fresh from the heart, even if we do not know how rightly to put it into words. The most remarkable prayers recorded in Scripture—prayers which received remarkable and distinct answers—were of this sort; asking God for what was wanted, with full expectation that if it were right and wise He would grant it.

We must never forget that condition—*if it be according to God's will*. We must not even wish that God would grant any request which He sees to be wrong or foolish. I doubt not God had put it into Hannah's heart to be thus specially earnest, because He meant to grant her prayer. So when her little son was born, she called him Samuel—'*Heard of God*'.

II. The next remarkable thing in Samuel's history is, that he was **Given to the Service of God** while yet a little child. As he was of the tribe of Levi, he would have been bound to take his turn in the public service of God's house, helping the priests in their

sacred ministry, when he grew up.<sup>1</sup> But his mother could not be content for him to wait until then. She wished God's house to be Samuel's home from his early childhood, so that when he grew up he might not be able to remember the time when he did not serve God. God's house at that time was the Tabernacle. The Temple was not built till about a hundred years afterwards. As soon as little Samuel was able to do without his mother's daily care—which might be when he was three years old—she brought him to the high priest Eli, at Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was. Elkanah, Samuel's father, brought with him a liberal present—three bullocks, a bushel of flour, and a goat-skin full of wine. Then they brought the child to Eli, and Hannah said, 'Oh, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.' So 'Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod'. That is, he was dressed like a little priest; and learned by degrees to fulfil such simple duties as Eli thought suitable to his age—lighting and trimming the lamps, opening and closing the doors, and the like. 'Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. . . . And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.'

Samuel could not have been given to God's service in this particular way had his father not belonged to the tribe of Levi. None but Aaron's family could be priests, and none but Levites could help the priests in their holy ministry. But now that the Gospel has come in place of the old Jewish Law, the earthly temple, priests, and sacrifices are all done away, because Christ has offered the One Real Sacrifice, and has entered as our Priest into heaven. Christian ministers, therefore, are not priests, but teachers. All true Christians are called 'priests' in the New Testament (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. v. 9, 10)—that is, all are called to be alike holy, alike near to God, and to serve Him continually; some in the ministry of the Gospel, or other special kinds of usefulness, but all in daily living to His glory. 'Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The true Temple is heaven, where Jesus dwells, and God's glory is manifested. There all who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, will have a place, as it is written, 'Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.' . . . 'And His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face' (1 Cor. x. 31; Rev. vii. 14, 15; xxii. 3, 4).

III. The next great event in Samuel's history is just what might be expected: God called Samuel to

<sup>1</sup> See the pedigree of Samuel in 1 Chronicles vi. 33-38, where his name is spelt (as in Hebrew) *Shemuel*.

His service. His parents gave him to the Lord, and the Lord accepted their gift. He did more. As if a poor man should offer to a king a precious stone which he has found on the seashore; and the king, instead of merely putting it among his common treasures, should have it carefully polished and set in his crown: so God put honour on the child of Elkanah and Hannah, such as they never dreamed of. They had thought only of giving their boy to a humble, quiet life of service in the Tabernacle, where, when he should grow up, he would take his place among his brother Levites. God called him to such service as very few men in the whole history of the world have been honoured to render; and gave him a name side by side with that of Moses, among the greatest of His prophets (Jer. xv. 2; Ps. cxix. 6).

**God called Samuel Early.**—The Scripture does not tell us how old he was when God spoke to him, and gave him his sad and solemn message to good old Eli. The Jewish historian Josephus says he was twelve years old—just the age, you remember, at which Our Saviour paid His first visit to the Temple. This was very young to be a Prophet. Moses had to wait till he was eighty years old before God saw fit to send him to deliver Israel. The Lord Jesus gave a wonderful example of patience and humility, by living quietly at home till he was thirty years old—the age at which Joseph was promoted to rule over Egypt, and David to be king over Israel. But God had wise reasons for beginning to employ Samuel as His prophet while yet a child. Perhaps one reason was to humble the pride of such ungodly priests as Eli's wicked sons; and another, to show that it is not human wisdom, but God's Spirit, that makes a prophet. No doubt God gave him at first short and simple messages, like that to Eli—though that was one of the most sorrowful he had to deliver—and trained him by degrees for the great work of his life.

So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. How his parents must have wondered when they heard this! The boy-prophet found himself looked up to, and his counsel sought by the oldest, wisest, bravest men in the land. Great humility was needed to bear such honour meekly; to feel that he was but God's servant and messenger, and not to grow vain, conceited and self-glorious. As young plants need shade, and wither if the scorching sun shines full on them, so it is commonly dangerous for young persons to come out early into the glare of public notice. But God, who called Samuel to this high office, fitted him for it, you may be sure, by giving him true humility; for it is written that 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble'.

**God called Samuel very Gently and Patiently.**—Not in a voice of thunder, like that which made even Moses tremble, when the Israelites said, 'Let not God speak to us, lest we die'. But in a gentle, kind, father-like tone, which the boy mistook for the voice

of good, kind old Eli. Not a voice from heaven like that which Abraham heard, but close beside his bed. This is what is meant when it is said, 'the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel!' It sounded like some one quite close, speaking softly. How patiently, too, these calls were repeated! Four times the Lord called him, never chiding him for his mistakes; till at last, when Samuel knew it was the Lord, he did not feel frightened, but was ready to say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'.

Even thus gently, patiently, repeatedly, does God call you to give your heart to Him. By how many voices! By the voices of parents, teachers, ministers. By the lessons of His providence. By the promises, the precepts, the examples, the warnings of His word. By the voice of His Spirit, who says, 'To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts!' 'Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.'—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 103.

### THE SERMON

'For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.'—I SAMUEL I. 27, 28.

#### I. The Child Samuel was Asked of the Lord.—

It is nowadays common to name babes after their kinsfolks, parents, grandparents, or other relatives. But at first sons and daughters got names from some circumstance attending their birth, or some hope regarding their future lives. The Bible gives us many examples of this. Thus, Moses, and John, and Jesus, and Samuel, are all names with a meaning, and intended to instruct. Moses means outdrawn; and this name was given to the child of Amram and Jocheb by Pharaoh's daughter, for she said, 'I have drawn him out of the water.' John is a very solemn and teaching name. It means Jehovah-given. As applied to the child of Zacharias, it said that this babe was a special gift from God to his parents and to the Church, the messenger sent before the face of His Son to prepare his ways. You all know the reason assigned by the angel for the name Jesus being given to the child promised to Mary: 'He shall save His people from their sins,' and therefore He is called Jehovah-his-help—Jehovah-saving. Hannah had a reason, too, for the name she gave her child. She said, 'I have asked him of the Lord,' and called him Samuel; that is, 'heard of God'.

#### II. The Child Samuel was Lent to the Lord.—

Take notice of the expression employed by Hannah in the text. She says, 'I have lent him to the Lord'. Eli, in the same style, speaks (II. 20) of Samuel as a 'loan lent to the Lord'. In her prayer Hannah uses also the word 'give'. But she gave as a loan for life. Then it would appear she expected to get him back again. And so she has, in a better world.

Now in a very important sense every child of believing parents is lent to the Lord. There was a sign of this formerly in the ordinance of circumcision; and

now we have a like sign in the ordinance of baptism. When a parent brings his infant to be baptised, he says, 'I give my child to God; I own his claim, and feel that my child is not mine, so much as God's: I will therefore strive to bring him up for God's service. When you were baptised you were lent in this way to God. Now, I have to ask you, will you take back the loan? or will you confirm it, and count yourselves not your own, but Christ's.'

There was more than this, however, meant in Hannah's lending. Her other children, born after Samuel, were all dedicated. But Samuel was given to the public ministry. He was to be brought up as a Nazarite; and was to be, so to say, left at God's disposal for service in the way God should call him to do. We know that he became a great prophet and judge, and performed also priestly acts. In accordance with her vow, Hannah brought him when he was only three years old, and left him at the Tabernacle with Eli. She came to see him after that, year by year, but she did not take him home. He continued with the high priest, and ministered in his presence. He was a little Levite servant to Eli, and to God.

Put the two heads of discourse together and remark:—

1. That we can give to God only what we first receive from Him. David felt this when he said of the contributions for building the Temple, 'Of Thine own have we given Thee, and Thine is all this store'. And it is easy to see that it must be so. We have nothing of ourselves. Do we give God service?—He strengthened us for it. Do we give him money?—He enabled us to get it. Do we give him love?—He taught us to cherish it.

2. We ought to give to God again of all we receive from Him. Our very condition as creatures proves this, and there is express law for it. He gave us life, and we should live to Him. He gave us speech, and we should praise Him. He gave us hearts, and we should love Him. He gives us possessions, and we should remember His word, 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase'. He made us, and sent His Son to save us, and we should give him ourselves.

3. When we ask earthly good, it should be with the view of serving Him. If I ask health, or riches, or long life, it should not be merely to enjoy these things, but to use them for God's glory.

4. When God borrows, it is for our advantage. He does not need our gifts, but He never forgets them. He rewards generously.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church*, p. 435.

### LENT TO THE LORD

'I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.'—I SAMUEL I. 28.

PICTURE out scene. [A hill surrounded by hills, as though in a cup, on it the old age-worn Tabernacle. Little party, man, woman, boy, bullock with flour and wine, approaches. Old man, dim-eyed, near Tabernacle. The interview. Hannah's story. The loan.]



May remind us of another scene. [Font in church—clergyman—parents and child—cf. Baptismal Service, 'We receive this child,' etc.] So we, *lent to Christ*, and that when we were too small to say whether we should like to be lent or not! Think:—

### 1. The Lending, and Why it was Right.

#### 1. As to parents.

A loan a good loan when it brings good interest. [*Illustration.*—Money in clothing club or savings bank.] When we lend to God He always gives good interest, cf. 1 Samuel ii. 20, 'Three sons and two daughters' for the loan that is lent to the Lord'. So Hannah lends God one child and gets five instead! 500 per cent interest!

#### 2. As to child.

It was a good thing for the boy. [*Illustration.*—Suppose, when grown up, you were told that you might have had a good place in the Queen's household—Queen quite willing, only mother could not decide for you. What say!] Here mother did decide for the boy, and he never blamed her, for he could not have had a better place. Taught there better than anywhere else, and servant to the best of all masters.

When our parents, sponsors, etc., made promise for us—lent us to Christ—what better thing could they have done for us! what better master could we have than Christ, in whose service we have been enrolled!

### II. After the Lending.

#### 1. How the child got on.

(1) Taught by the high priest—always ready to help him.

(2) His work always about the Tabernacle.

And when we are lent to God, who is our High Priest, always ready to teach and help us? A tabernacle, too, for us to look after. What? [Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost? 'Ye are the temple of God.']

#### 1. What the mother did.

(1) Looked after her loan. 'Year by year' came up to Tabernacle.

(2) Gave him a gift, yearly—a little priestly robe—to remind him of his duties, his service.

(3) No doubt prayed for him.

So our parents, having lent us, should look after us—remind us of our duties to the Master. Pray and work that we may be faithful servants. [Should parents be present, special appeal may be made to them.]

And the children—lent to the Lord. Are you taking Samuel as your model?—working for the Master—looking after Tabernacle—keeping near the High Priest?—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 141.

### SLIPPERY WAYS

'He will keep the feet of His saints.'—1 SAMUEL II. 9.

Just a little word from a little text about a great matter! God promises to keep the feet of His saints. Who are saints? They are those who love God and try to please Him.

We often hear about the old saints; we don't hear much about the young ones. But that is only a way people have of talking. There are young saints as well as old ones, and this text was spoken about a very young one indeed—about Samuel when he was a very little boy; so this great promise God makes is for you, my little ones, as well as for older folk.

But why should God need to keep your feet? Ah, if you were in the Highlands of Scotland, or the Alps, or among mountains anywhere, you wouldn't be long in finding what a kind, precious promise this is. There a man's life has often to depend on the strength and firmness of his foot. If his foot gave way for an instant—if it trembled—if a sudden pain struck through it—the man would be dashed in pieces down the precipice. So God promises to keep the feet of those that trust Him when they are walking in dangerous places, or when snares and pitfalls are about them, and to guide and help them.

A friend of mine took his holiday lately in the hill country, among the lakes, in the North of England. He had a companion with him, a little, quiet, wiry, active fellow—and one day the two thought they would cross the hills by a narrow footpath which was rarely used. So up they clambered in the bracing air, higher and higher still, till the forests beneath looked like dark tufts of moss, and the lakes like silver shields. All around them were only the bare rocks, grim and silent and black. So they got to the top of Redscree, and began to descend on the other side, and the way was very steep, and got steeper and steeper at each step, till, whenever the ground was the least bit broken, they couldn't tell whether it was a precipice that was beyond, or only a 'drop' of a few feet—and of course they had to move along very cautiously.

It was well they did so, for, as they were letting themselves down bit by bit, holding on by hands and feet to the face of the rock, my friend suddenly saw a precipice right beneath him—and he couldn't go back! What to do he did not know. 'Keep steady!' said his companion—the active, cool little fellow—'keep steady, and let me go down to the edge below you.' So down he crept to the feet of my friend, and then—crawling along—he felt all the stones with his hand and rolled away those that were loose, and planted my friend's feet on a firm place—and even held them, too, where the ground was not very secure; and so the two got past that point—got past to learn, when they had reached the valley, that only three weeks before a man had gone over that very precipice and been killed.

Maybe some day you will be in a dangerous place like that; pray God He may then keep your feet! But whether your feet are ever in a dangerous place like that among mountains or not, your spirit is certain sometimes to be in dangers just as great as you go about in the world. You will have temptations; God alone can keep your feet while these are around. And the worst temptation of all will be, when you know a thing is wrong and yet want to do

it. That's a slippery place—very slippery and very dangerous—and you can't help yourself then, for you *want* to do wrong, though you know it is wrong. Oh, cry to the good Lord in that time. He will keep your feet—and none but He can keep you then.

And sometimes when you are doing right, you will find yourself in dangerous ways too—for the path of duty is always an upward one, upward among rocks. But then—be sure of it—God will keep your feet, for you are on the right way. He doesn't promise to keep your feet if you go on wrong ways, for then He isn't with you—you don't want Him. But when you are on right ways, doing right things, never fear, He will keep you, for He will be with you. Trust Him and take Him with you wherever you go, for those that trust and love Him are His saintly ones, and He will keep the feet of His saints.—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Angel*, p. 147.

### THE CHILD MINISTER

'Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.'—I SAMUEL II. 18.

THE first thing I want you to notice about Samuel is this—that, like most good men, he had the best thing that any little child can find when first it comes into the world—a *praying mother*. When I was a boy there was a very favourite story of mine about a negro who sat one day on the deck of a steamer, waiting to be sold. He was very wretched, sitting there with his face buried in his hands, when a stranger came up and asked him what was the matter. 'Me gwine to be sold, massa,' said the poor negro. 'What for?' asked the stranger. 'Well, you see, me disobey orders. Me pray too loud, and my massa gwine to sell me. He let me pray easy, but when me gets happy me begin to holler, and then me know nothing about orders or anything else.' The stranger was struck with the negro's appearance, and as the master came up just then he said, 'What will you take for your negro?' The price was a hundred and fifty pounds. He was healthy, the master said, and the best hand on the estate. But he got religious, and used to pray so loud that the master had resolved to get rid of him. Now the stranger thought that it would be a very good thing if he could get a good negro to pray for him and for his family, so he bought him. 'Has he a wife and family?' the stranger asked. 'Yes,' said the old master, 'a wife and three children, and I will sell them for a hundred and fifty more.' The stranger paid the three hundred pounds, and then going up to the negro, he said to him, 'Well Moses, I've bought you'. 'Oh, hab you, massa?' and the poor negro looked very, very sad. He was thinking of his wife and children. 'Yes, and your wife and children too,' said the stranger. 'Bless God for that!' cried Moses. 'And look here,' said the gentleman, 'you may pray as much and as long and as loud as you like, only whenever you pray you must pray for me and for my wife and my children.' 'Why, bless the Lord,' cried Moses, 'me hab all kind o'

commodation, like Joseph in Egypt.' Twelve months had gone by, when one day his old master came in to see him. He found Moses measuring corn and looking very happy. 'I want to buy Moses back again,' he said, 'I can't get on without him; everything is going wrong, and I've been a miserable man'. 'No,' said his master, 'I'm not going to sell Moses to anybody, but I shall give him his liberty, and let him work for me if he will as a free man, for since he has been here, I and my wife and my children have found the Saviour, and everything has prospered wonderfully. I owe more than I can ever tell to praying Moses.' 'Oh, massa,' cried Moses, with tears in his eyes, 'me always prays for you too, sare. Me put the old massa and the new one both together.' Now if a man would give three hundred pounds for a praying slave, who can tell the worth of a praying mother? Next to the love of Jesus in our own hearts, the best thing in the world is this—a mother who prays for us. I have heard people say sometimes of a boy who was born heir to a large estate, or to very much money, 'Ah, he's a lucky fellow—he is born with a silver spoon in his mouth'. But very often it was the most unlucky thing that could happen. This is the best fortune that any child can have—the heritage of a mother's prayers.

First, let us think about **The Child Minister**.—Samuel ministered before the Lord, *being a child*. No doubt Eli saw that the child was called of God. But even then he must have been a very kind and a very wise old man to let this little fellow come to help him in the house of the Lord when he was so young. Most people would have said, 'What is the good of a little lad like that? What help can he be? He is not strong enough or big enough or wise enough to do anything. Let him stay at home, and let his mother take care of him till he is grown up. Then he will be of some good. But this child, he is too little to know anything about it.' I think this story is put in the Bible to teach us that it is very foolish and very wrong to talk in this way. The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord, and so can you. Your little hands can serve Him, and your young hearts can love Him. Let nobody say you are too young. Jesus said something very different from that. He said, 'Suffer the *little* children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven'. And at another time Jesus said, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them *unto babes*. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.' So you see, Jesus would have you to love Him now and serve Him now. He would not have you wait till you are grown up. He wants *children* to minister to Him. Samuel, though a child, was not too young to love Jesus.

'But what could this little child minister do?' you ask. 'It was all very well for him to be with the old man Eli, learning good lessons, and hearing God's word, but of course He could not *do* anything.' Oh,

but he could. He did many things that were helpful, as we shall see by and by.

Little folks can do very many things. To begin with, nobody doubts that *children can do much harm*.

People know that **Little Things Can do Much Good**.—Those o' you who keep your eyes open—and I hope you all do—must have seen at the railway stations and at other places a picture of a lion in a net, and a little mouse gnawing at the rope. And this is the story that it represents. A lion who was the great king of the forest had somehow got into a net—I don't know how, but so it was. All the animals when they heard of it came to his majesty's help. The elephant came and walked round and round as majestically as it could, and looked very sad. The bear came and danced all about. The tiger came and roared very loudly indeed. But all that did not bring the king out of his trouble. Then came the hyenas and jackals and wolves, and they shook their heads very wisely, and said if only this were done, and that. But as no one could possibly do what they talked about, that didn't help very much. So it seemed that the great king of the forest must die thus miserably in a net. Then as the lion was sadly bemoaning his fate there came a little mouse, and said that if he might make so bold he thought he could set his majesty at liberty. It was very absurd in such a little thing to try and do what the elephant and the great animals could not do. But the lion thought there could be no harm in his trying. So he crept up to the rope and began to gnaw at it. Strand after strand of the rope was bitten through by the sharp little teeth. It was a long and wearisome task, but the little teeth worked on. At last the rope was loosed, and when once it gave way it was an easy thing for the lion to get out, and the king of the forest was set at liberty by a little mouse. Such good little things can do.

I must say a word about another thing. 'Samuel ministered unto the Lord, being a child, **Girded With a Linen Ephod**.' The linen ephod was the dress that the priest wore. You may read of it in the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus and the sixth verse. Though he was only a child, yet it would not do for Samuel to appear before the Lord without the proper robe. Not in his own robes, but in the robes that were appointed and commanded of God. And so, I think, God teaches us that we cannot minister to him in our own strength or our own goodness. We must get the right robe, and that is the robe washed and made white in the blood of Jesus. We must get His Spirit into our hearts. When He has forgiven us our sins and washed them all away, and when He has clothed us with His love and gentleness and truth and wisdom and courage and goodness, then we are beautiful in His sight. The ephod was to be made of gold, of purple, of blue, of scarlet, and of fine twined linen. We must come to Jesus for the robe first, the golden love and all the virtues, and the

cleansing blood. Before any of us can minister unto the Lord we must have the right robe.

And then, lastly, we are told that his mother made him **A Little Coat**.—She was a wise mother, and made his coat to fit him. Boys and girls, don't any of you think that because you are going to minister to the Lord, you must give up being children, and must be men and women. Many people think that ministering children must never have *little coats*. They make great stiff solemn coats, much too long and too heavy and too clumsy for little wearers. The blessed Lord would have you minister to Him, and wear the linen ephod. But you are to wear the little coat too. Be simple and happy and merry, like children; and wear your little coats even though you minister unto the lord.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 56.

### SAMUEL'S LITTLE COAT

'Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.'—I SAMUEL II, 19.

SHILOH is one of the saddest places in the Holy Land. It is now a mere heap of grey stones in a corner of a lonely treeless valley. But there are few places that so deeply touch the heart, for it calls forth tender memories of the childhood of Samuel, and teaches us lessons that are to be learned nowhere else, except in that obscure town among the northern hills where the holy child Jesus grew up in wisdom as in stature. When visiting this haunted spot, I wondered if any of the hoary stones which my foot touched had formed part of the rude wall that enclosed the sacred Tabernacle of Israel, or had come in contact in any way with the little Levite who ministered there. The very thought was enough to waken a thrill in my heart, and make the whole wonderful past of the place live again before my inner eye.

Shiloh was once the very heart of the Holy Land, where the pulse of national life and religion beat loudest. To that holy shrine all the people of Israel came on a pilgrimage once a year. Friends and neighbours made the journey together for the sake of protection and pleasant fellowship. The pious parents of Samuel had been regular pilgrims to this appointed altar, and God rewarded their devotion by giving them the dearest wish of their heart. Hannah, the mother, was a woman of exceptional gifts and goodness. She was worthy of a high place in the household of faith. She dedicated her child to the Lord before he was born, and made him from his earliest infancy a Nazarite. When he was old enough to enter upon some childlike service in the Tabernacle, she brought him to Shiloh. She gave to God the gift she had received from God. The priests, who took a deep interest in the little boy entrusted to their charge, gave him a garment called an ephod; a close-fitting coat made of white linen, like that which the high priest wore; and thus he became an acolyte, and his special duty was to put out the sacred light of the golden candlestick that had burned all night,



and to open the doors of the Tabernacle at sunrise. But in addition to the ephod his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up to Shiloh with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

I. What could be more touching and beautiful than the fact that Samuel's little coat was made by his mother? How full of sweet meaning it is! It is very wonderful how among the lower creatures they make provision for their young by removing parts of themselves for the purpose. The spider encloses its eggs in a silken bag made from its own substance. The solan goose lines its nest with the down which it plucks from its own breast. We have something like this touching devotion in the case of the Waldensian mother who carries in her bosom the flask of water which she gives to the minister on the occasion of the baptism of her child. She thus warms the ice-cold glacier water of her native valleys with the vital heat of her own heart before it touches the face of her child, and the ceremony is thereby invested with a new and most beautiful significance.

Equally significant was the provision of the little Hebrew priest's robe by his mother. We can picture the pious Hannah at home preparing the little coat. She could not buy the linen of which it was made. Each Israelite had to grow on his own farm what he needed for himself and his family, food and clothing and fuel. And doubtless Hannah's husband, in his field on Mount Ephraim, sowed and reaped the flax which she spun and wove and bleached into the linen web, out of which she shaped and sewed the little garment which she presented to her son. Year after year, a part of the produce of the flax harvest was consecrated to this pious use. The blessing of God would be asked upon the sowing and the reaping of the flax; and many a pious thought and prayer would Hannah form as she spun and wove the linen web, and shaped out of it the pure white linen coat for her son. We can think of her sewing the little priestly robe that was to be employed in the service of God, cherishing fond thoughts of her little boy away beyond the hills, and dreaming as she sewed, as mothers always will, bright dreams of the future of her son. And many a wish did she frame, and many a prayer did she utter, that her boy might be honoured of God to serve his generation nobly; for the times were sadly out of joint, and those who loved the Lord were indeed few and faint.

II. It is good when a mother makes the tiny garments that cover the bodies of her little ones. No more appropriate hands can shape them; and it is a happy task, for many a bright hope and loving thought are sewed up with every stitch. But it is better still when she makes, as she alone can make, the clothes of the immortal young souls committed to her care. The first clothes of the soul, whatever may be said regarding the first clothes of the body, are made by her. The first influence that comes to the mobile character of the child is from the mother, and whatever great and good things have been done

in the world may be traced to the impulses and the teachings received from a mother's lips. It is her character that is most deeply impressed upon her child; and it has been often observed that the great majority of the human family 'take after the mother'. The biographies of those who have been most distinguished for talent and virtue reveal the fact that they have been the children of remarkable mothers. To the mother's hand in infancy they have owed the sowing of the good seed whose growth and fruiting have been a blessing to themselves and to the world. Eithne, the mother of the great St. Columba, who was among the first to bring the Gospel to our country when it was in heathen darkness, like Hannah, dedicated her little Samuel to the Lord from his birth. Before he was born, she dreamed one night that an angel presented to her a garment of the most beautiful texture and varied hues. This gift, however, He afterwards took away; and as it flew through the sky it continued to unfold and extend itself over mountains and plains, until at length it covered a space which her eye could not measure. Finding what she had once possessed thus gone out of her reach, she was grieved exceedingly at her loss; but the angel comforted her by saying that the expanding garment was a symbol of the teaching of the child that should be born to her, which would spread over all Ireland and Scotland, and clothe an innumerable company of souls with the garment of salvation.

Blessed are those who, like Samuel and St. Columba, are early taught the piety which has its root in mother's love; who are not only wrapped in the mantle of maternal affection, which, better than all others, protects the young from the evils of the world, but who are also clothed by a mother's hand, by her teaching and example, under the blessing of heaven, with the robe of Christ's righteousness—that robe which from the very beginning makes them kings and priests unto God and the Father!

III. The coat of Samuel lasted all his life. I do not mean the same identical coat, for we read that every year—we do not know how long—while Samuel ministered in the Tabernacle, his mother prepared and brought up for him a new coat.

That coat was invested with too many hallowed memories and associations to be ever abandoned. It was the symbol to him of his mother's love and care. It was the robe of religious consecration, to be kept ever sacred. Everywhere we see him dressed in it. It was always appropriate, for while he was a prophet and a judge, he had never ceased to be a priest. We see him offering sacrifice on public occasions for the people; we hear his loud cries and prayers to God on behalf of Israel in times of danger and distress. In his own house at Ramah he built an altar to the Lord; and whatever he did, whether ministering at the altar as a priest, or sitting in the chair of justice as a judge, or denouncing doom against the evils of the people as a prophet, he wore the same garment, and the people looked upon him with the same profound reverence with which their fathers had regarded

Moses. He was known by his peculiar garment wherever he appeared. Saul laid hold of its skirt when he finally parted from Samuel at Gilgal; and as it rent in the unhappy monarch's hand, the awful words of doom were pronounced, 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou'. By the peculiar appearance of his mantle Saul recognised him in the vision of Endor, when he exclaimed, 'I see a god ascending out of the earth'. Thus we find that the little coat which his mother gave him—enlarging its size to suit his advancing years—marked him out as a consecrated person from his childhood to his latest days. He was true all his life to the purpose for which that robe set him apart. The service of God, to which his mother dedicated him from his infancy, was the service in which his whole life, from the beginning to the end, was spent. He identified himself so completely with his mother's coat, that it became in all after ages the mantle of the prophet—the peculiar distinguishing dress of every seer and teacher among men.

In the matters of the soul the child should be father to the man. Its spiritual garments should grow with the growth of the soul, and increase with the years of those who wear them. Like the miraculous clothes of the Israelites, they should not wax old in all the passing years, but fit life's latest days as they fitted its earliest hours. How delightful to walk with Christ in white all through life; to keep that white robe unstained by the world and unspotted by the flesh; to wear the same priestly dress of love to God and service to man through the varied duties and experiences of life, exchanging it in the end only for the white robe in which the redeemed serve God day and night in His Temple.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 248.

### THE CHILD SAMUEL

I SAMUEL III. 1-10.

God was to speak to Samuel, and to tell him His will. Now God very often speaks to all of you, in a great many different ways, at a great many different times; let us see what some of them are. Whenever you hear His Word, He is speaking to you, is He not? for it was God the Holy Ghost that wrote that Word, and that wrote it for you, as much as for any other of His people; He knew what *you* would want to be told, He knew what *you* would want to be warned against; and all this that Blessed Spirit then put down, and put down for your sakes. Then again, whenever your conscience says to you, this thing is very disagreeable, but still you ought to do it, and you must do it, or when your conscience says to you, such another thing is very pleasant, looks very bright, seems to promise a great deal of happiness, but it is *sin*, and how can you do this great wickedness, and offend against God?—that is God speaking to you, and it is very, very sad if you do not attend.

But now about Samuel. God spoke to him, but not at all at the time when you might have expected.

Samuel was not saying his prayers, Samuel was not in any of the services of the Temple; he was not doing any especial good act; he was only *in bed*. And that may teach you that you never know how and when God may speak to you. Have you never had a good thought put into your minds, you could not tell why, you could not tell how? it just came in of its own accord, very likely your guardian angel put it there, but it was God's voice nevertheless; and you never can tell how or when it may come; the thing is, always to be prepared to hear it.

Now see something else. God called, and Samuel heard; but Samuel did not know that it was God. He thought it was Eli. He *ran* unto Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou callest me. I wonder, by the by, how many of you, if you were woke out of your first sleep as Samuel was then, would *run*, as he did, to the person that called you? It is just these little things that make true obedience; we are none of us likely to have any great things set us to do for Christ's sake; the great matter is, to do little things *at once*. This is the example which our dear Lord set us. As soon as ever God the Father sent Him to redeem the world, *then*, without any delay, *then*, without any hesitation, *then*, that very moment, He said, Lo I come, to do Thy will, O God. And depend upon it when He went down and lived in that poor cottage in Nazareth, and was subject to St. Mary and to St. Joseph, He did readily and willingly and at once whatever He was told to do. When He was sent on His blessed mother's errands, He went at once; when He was employed to fetch any of St. Joseph's tools, He went at once. I do not want you to be like that son in the parable who, when his father said to him, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard, said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and went. To be sure, it was a great deal better to do this than not to go at all, but how much best of all it would have been to have gone the very moment he was commanded!

Well, I said that Samuel did not know it was God that was calling him, and thought it was Eli. You say, I wonder how he could ever have made such a mistake! It must have been so easy to tell the difference. Did you ever, any of you, make the same mistake? come, I will not say, *ever*; let us take the time since you came here, and that has now been four days. Have you all always got up that very first moment that the bell rang? Have you all always done exactly and at once what you were set to do in your lessons, or your work, or your play? 'No,' you say; 'but then that is a very different thing. It was only the bell that called us, it was only the mother, or sister Martha who told us what to do; it was not as if God were speaking to us'. Indeed, it *was* just exactly the very same thing. You thought it was the bell that rang, or the mother that spoke, just as Samuel thought it was Eli that spoke; but all the while it was God's voice to you; and when you disobeyed it, you disobeyed Him; and if you obey it, you obey Him. So you must not wonder,

you see, if Samuel made a mistake that you yourselves have made only the last few days.

Now there is something else in Samuel that I praise very much. Here he was called up three times, in the middle of the night, and all, it seemed, to no purpose; and yet he went readily and cheerfully, and every time it was, 'Here I am: for thou didst call me'. Remember, all of you, it is not enough to do what you are set, unless you do it willingly. If you feel cross all the time you are doing it, if you take as little pains about it as possible, if you try to get it over as soon as you can, that is not the kind of obedience that God loves.

And now at last Eli found out the mistake. Eli perceived that God had called the child. And we can very often see when God is calling a child now, when God is putting something in her ways which will prove whether she really means to do His will or her own: yes, and is giving her grace to obey Him, is calling her nearer and nearer to Him, because some day He means to call her to live with Him for ever and ever. As I get to know you all better, what a pleasure it will be to me to see that God is calling some of you in this way! What a great happiness to find out that you are trying to do something which is disagreeable, because you know that it is right, or to leave alone something that is very pleasant, because you are sure that it is wrong!

Then Eli told Samuel what to do. He was to go and lie down once more, and if God called him again, he was to answer, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'. And Samuel did so; only he left out one little word: and what was that? Eli had told him to say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth': but he did say, 'Speak—speak, for Thy servant heareth'. I suppose he could not believe that the God Who made heaven and earth would come down to speak to a child like himself: he did not think it possible that the voice, the still small voice which he heard in the quietness and darkness of that night, could be the same voice which, as he had read, had given the Law upon Mount Sinai, when the people were so terrified at the sound, that they said to Moses, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die'. But what would Samuel have said if he had known what all of you know—that God not only speaks to children, but that He became a Child Himself: first a little helpless Baby, as weak and helpless as any other baby, quite dependent on His dear mother, nursed by her, fed by her, rocked to sleep by her; and then a Child, learning as other children, playing as other children, in all things doing as other children do, only without sin? Do you not think this would have astonished Samuel, much more than it did that God should have appeared to him in Shiloh! Much as he knew of God's love at that time, do you not think it would have seemed to him quite beyond all belief that the God of all things should become a Child in the cottage of a poor carpenter?

And see, when God had thus called Samuel, what

He gave him to do. It was a very hard and very painful thing. He was to go to Eli, and give him a very sad and very painful message. Because Eli had not kept back his sons from their great wickedness, therefore in one day they were both to die, and the High Priesthood was to be taken away out of that family. It says, 'Samuel feared to show Eli the vision'. I dare say he did, but still, he did as he was commanded, and he did it faithfully: he kept back nothing: Samuel told him every whit; he hid nothing from him. And Eli received it like a good man as he was, notwithstanding his faults; he said: 'It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good'.

God very often speaks to all of you, and yet you do not know who it is that is speaking; you never can tell how or when He may say something to you which you are bound to obey; when those who are set over you tell you to do anything, it is not so much they who speak as it is God that speaks; and therefore, whatever you do at their bidding, you must, as the Apostle says, 'do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 109.

### SAMUEL, GOD, AND DARKNESS

'And Samuel was laid down to sleep, and the Lord called Samuel.'—I SAMUEL III. 3, 4.

THERE are many, many fair and beautiful dispositions in the world, but the disposition of God is the fairest and most beautiful of all. This we know because God is like Christ Jesus. It was His spirit and disposition that shone out into Christ's life, and that was the fairest, loveliest life the world has ever seen. Now, the boy Samuel, though without our advantages, as he had neither seen Jesus, nor been able to read about Him—for when Samuel lived Jesus had not yet come into the world,—knew some very joyful things of God. About one of these I will tell you.

One night Samuel heard the voice of God! I dare say if anyone had told him that he was going to hear the voice of so great and holy a Being speaking to him, the little fellow would have felt afraid. To hear God speak! Oh, that must be very dreadful! for people seem naturally to think that the great and holy God must be terrible. Samuel had, doubtless, read how the children of Israel, when they heard the thunder on Sinai, and felt the mountain quake, said it was the voice of God, and they exceedingly feared and trembled; and perhaps Samuel would not think that God would make any difference when He was speaking to a little boy; for the Bible says Samuel did not know God yet.

When God spoke from Sinai, He was speaking to a great crowd—a crowd of grown-up people, and very hard-hearted and wicked people; but when He spoke to Samuel, He was speaking to a boy, a little boy, all alone and in the dark night.

Samuel, however, had no warning that God was going to speak to him. He did not know anything about it, and when the voice came he mistook it, so



sweet and gentle was it, for the voice of kind old Eli. Samuel lived with Eli in the same house. It was night when the voice came, and both Eli and Samuel were in bed. 'Samuel, Samuel,' it said, and Samuel thought, 'There is Eli calling me. Perhaps he's ill and wants something'; for Eli was old. And Samuel lost no time in going to see what Eli might want.

I cannot tell you how much I like to think of this mistaking the voice of God for *Eli's* voice; for the dear old Eli could not find in his heart to speak harshly to people. Even when his own boys were behaving badly, and doing wicked things, his voice was without one tone of harshness. It was a pity that it was so; for his naughty and uncorrected boys grew up—as all naughty boys who are uncorrected do—to be bad and miserable men. But when the old man had to speak to Samuel there was no need for harshness. He found in him all that his fond heart longed for, and he could always speak to him in the tender tones he loved so well. And I like to think, too, that the voice was mistaken for Eli's voice *in the night*, when there would be more than usual tenderness through the old man's natural reluctance to wake him out of his first sleep.

So this little story is to me one of the most beautiful things in all the Bible. It is beautiful in itself. Just think about it. A little boy is all alone, and in the dark, lying on his little bed and fast asleep. God speaks to him and awakes him, and his first waking thought is that the voice which woke him is the voice of the old man who loves him so much, and he goes to the old man. The Bible does not say that the old man patted the little fellow's cheek, and stroked his head, when he sent him back to his bed and told him that he was a good boy for coming, though he was mistaken—Eli had not called him; but from what we know of Eli's nature I am sure he would do so. And the boy would smile, and go back to bed again.

Then he lay down and fell asleep again. But the sweet voice did not leave him. Once more it awoke him. And such a delight was it to do anything that so kind a voice might want, the little fellow did not say, 'Oh, it's a mistake, I've been once. I've been dreaming again'. He was charmed out of bed again. And again did he go to Eli, and the old man was not vexed to be disturbed again. There was a strong affection between the two. Eli was happy to have the boy near him, and the boy was happy to be there, sleeping-time though it was. At last Samuel found out the voice to be the voice of God, and God and he had a little talk together.

I said this story was a beautiful story for its own sake, but it is still more beautiful for the sake of what it tells us about God—your God and mine. A jewel case may be beautiful, but the case exists for the gold and diamonds inside of it; and the story of this little boy in the night hearing God's voice is very beautiful, but the story is only the beautiful case of bright and glorious truths. For it teaches what God was in Samuel's day, and what God was then God is now,

and will always be. This is what we mean when we sing of the character of God—'As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be'. There are two jewels, then, in this case, two very precious truths in this story.

The first is, that supposing we should hear the voice of God, like other voices, speaking aloud to us, even awaking us out of our sleep, even in the dark and we were quite alone, we should not be frightened. It is so sweet and tender to alarm us. To know and believe *that* about God, would it not make the heart peaceful and strong? The second is, that even *a child* would not be afraid; for it would seem to its little heart to be most like some dear one's voice, the voice of perfect earthly love; a voice that would not only not awaken fear, but, if fear happened to be there when the voice came, would at once cast it out. This, then, is what we learn from the story of Samuel and God in the night.

So now, is not all this mixing up in Samuel's mind of the voice of God and the voice of Samuel's dear old friend very delightful? I love to talk about it just because it is far too common for a child to think of God in a way that frightens till at length it finds it best not to think about Him at all. He has been made to seem to it something like what a policeman seems to a thief, or what his task-master seems to a slave—An Eye looking to detect some cause of punishment. The idea of God coming in the dark, and to speak to it alone!—nothing could be more dreadful.

I knew a little boy who had just been doing something naughty, and to whom his mamma had been using the name of the Almighty God as a convenient rod of correction. She had been telling him how God was 'looking' at him, always looking, and how, when He saw a wrong thing in children, He put it down in His book of remembrance, and would at the last day bring all up in judgment against them. She was just finishing her talk as she tucked the boy up in bed. Looking to the venetian blinds at the bedroom window—which were down but open, so that they could be seen through—pale and afraid, he asked that they might be closed, and with much excitement he added, 'Can He see through the blinds?'

To him thoughts of God were dreadful, and he hoped the closed blinds might at least shut God out of his room. But if God had for Himself spoken to the little fellow about his easily besetting sin he might have cried, most likely he must have cried, perhaps as if he would cry his heart away, he would have been so sorry to think how he had grieved so gentle and so true a friend; but he would not have looked pale, he would not have trembled with fear, nor would he have wanted the blind to be turned to shut God out, though he might have wanted it turned to shut God in. He would have thrown the arms of his heart around such love and have cried, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is nobody in all the world that I want so much as Thee'. And when sleep had closed his weary eyes, the idea that God was watching would have given him such a smile as only

the angels wear. But it was not so. That poor, frightened boy was like Samuel before the voice came to him in the night—he did not yet *know the Lord*. He only knew one of the lords many and gods many which have been put into the minds of children, and frighten them, and which are all false. ‘God is love.’

We are never right, then, except when we think of God as we think of our dearest, truest friend.—BENJAMIN WAUGH, *Sunday Evenings with my Children*, p. 210.

### THE LIVING BOOK

‘Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.’—1 SAMUEL III. 9.

THERE is an old fairy story which some of you may remember. It tells us of one who possessed a magic ring which enabled him to understand the language of birds and beasts. Now I have often wished for such a ring. I should dearly like to understand what the birds in the hedges are saying to one another. I am quite sure that birds do talk to each other, and that dogs, and cows, and horses, and all animals have their secrets, which they whisper into each other’s ears.

Well, I am going to tell you about a child who fancied he could understand the language of the birds and beasts about him. He was not strong and healthy enough to play with other children, so he was much alone, and that made him very thoughtful. He was never tired of studying nature and learning about flowers, and trees, and animals; and from being so much with them, and so seldom with any other company, the child learned to find ‘Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything’. The child had read how the good St. Francis used to call the birds and beasts his brethren, how he called the lark his sister; and how, when he was dying, the Saint whispered—‘Welcome, sister death’. The child thought all this very beautiful, as indeed it is; and he loved to find his brethren and playmates in God’s world of nature. The child would think to himself—‘I am too weakly to play and run with other children, and they do not care for my talk. But the skylark can tell me what the world looks like from the blue sky, and the bees, as they go humming by, bring me sweet messages from the woods and meadows. I soon grow tired of hearing people talk, it makes my head ache. But I am never weary of the river that tells me such wonderful stories!’ Now, most people only heard the stream murmuring among the reeds, or rushing over the stones; but to the child the river spoke a language which he could understand. It told him how it was born in a little spring, far away among the hills, and how at first it was only a baby of a stream, and how it grew bigger and stronger, and carried ships and men far out to the wide sea. Sometimes the child was taken to the seaside, and there indeed he had friends to talk with. The winds and the waves brought all kinds of messages. Sometimes the wind seemed to tell him that it had come from Africa, and had been blowing over wide deserts of yellow sand, and dark, hot jungle.

Sometimes a fresh, cool wind would come blowing across the sea, which seemed to bring the child a message from the north, and he could see in fancy snow-crowned mountains, and dark pine-woods, and lakes of glittering ice. If he put a sea-shell to his ear the child would say that the shell was telling the secrets of the sea, and reminding him of Columbus, and Drake, and Raleigh, and many another good seaking of olden time. And the child would often say that God had been talking to him. And when his friends asked him how this was possible, the child would answer that God spoke to him by His works. The wind roaring in the autumn made the child remember ‘how God doth send forth His voice, yea, and that a mighty voice; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Cades’. When the autumn leaves fell thick around him, the child seemed to hear the voice of God whispering—‘We all do fade as a leaf. We fade away suddenly like the grass: in the morning it is green, and groweth up, but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.’ When the buds peeped out in valley and hedgerow in the spring time, the child seemed to hear God’s voice on every side, saying, ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life; He that sitteth upon the throne maketh all things new’. So it seemed that God spoke to the little boy. In the child’s home there was a great library of books, and when he could not go out he spent his time in reading. It seemed to him that the people in his favourite books were all living, and that they spoke to him. All the characters in the dear old fairy tales and children’s stories were real living companions to the lonely child. They could take him away from the room where he sat, and make him forget his weak health, and his solitary life. One day he was away in a lonely, tropical island with Robinson Crusoe, or Sinbad the Sailor, amongst brilliant birds, and glorious fruits and flowers. He could fly away in a minute to China, and see Aladdin’s palace and the wonderful lamp. So, too, all the persons in history seemed alive to the child, and appeared to walk out of the pages of the book as it were. When he read of the Norman Conquest he did not think of it as having happened eight hundred years ago, but only yesterday. The child fancied he could hear the tramp of feet as the Normans rushed up the hill at Hastings, and the whistling of the arrows, and the clash of the battle-axes round King Harold and the standard.

But there was one book which the child loved best, and which he always called his *Living Book*. That book was the Bible, and he was never tired of reading it. ‘They are all alive to me,’ he would say of the Scripture characters. ‘I can see them, and hear them talk, and then God speaks to me as He did to the child Samuel, and I answer, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth”’. It seemed to the child as if he knew Samuel as a boy of his own age, and as though they walked together in the house of the Lord as friends. He had cried over the death of the Shunamite’s son, and rejoiced at his return to life, just as

if these two children had known each other, and played together in the corn fields. But there was One Child whom the little boy loved to think of, and to look at oftener than any other. When he read of Him there seemed to rise before him a little town among the hills; a fair place, where the red cactus and many another flower grew wild. Among the children in the bright Easter dresses who played among the hills, or rested by the fountains, there was One whose face seemed more beautiful than the others, who, though He played with the children, was often grave and thoughtful. The little boy loved to follow every step of that Holy Child, through all the wondrous, beautiful story. He would picture the gentle, patient, loving life of the Child Jesus, and then pray that he might be gentle, and patient, and loving too. He tried to do as a famous Saint advises us, 'to be little with the Little One, that we may increase in stature with Him,' by setting before him the example of that Perfect Child who 'increased in stature and in favour with God and man'; as pure and stainless 'as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, and as lilies by the waters'.

So it was that the Bible was to the child a living book. He could see the workshop at Nazareth, and the Boy Jesus helping Joseph at his bench. He could see the gentle mother watching her Son with thoughtful eyes, and wondering how the words of the prophets should be fulfilled. He could see the Holy Child going for the first time to Jerusalem, along the road edged by fields of dazzling green, and spangled with a thousand flowers. He could see the spacious halls of the Temple, and watch the Child Jesus standing among the doctors.

So the child lived with the people of whom he read. If he felt weary he could go to Bethany, and rest with Martha and Mary, and see Jesus there. If he were weak and ailing, and laid upon his bed, Jesus seemed to stand by his side as He stood by the side of Jairus's little daughter. If he were sad and unhappy he could go to Gethsemane, and weep with Jesus. So it was that the child found comfort in his Bible, he could say—it is a living Book, Jesus is alive to me!

### LISTENING FOR GOD'S COMMANDS

'Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.—  
I SAMUEL III. 9.

Eli said, 'Go, lie down'; 'so Samuel went and lay down in his place'. That was doing simply what he was told. It was a little thing; but obedience has to do with little things a great deal more often than with great things. And I think a great many boys would at least have wanted telling twice before going to lie down again as Samuel did. If the same thing could happen to one of you who are listening to me now, would there be sure to be the same quiet and instant obedience? I could fancy the boy answering the good old priest, and saying, 'Oh, no; I am afraid.

Do let me stay with you. It makes me tremble to go and lie down all alone in the dark. If God does, call me again, and speak to me, I shall be frightened.' But Samuel said not a word. I think his little heart must have beaten very fast, but he said not a word. He just did simply and quietly what Eli told him to do.

And Eli gave him good advice. If God call thee, thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth'. It is about that good advice that I wish to speak to you for a few minutes to-day. God has set me to teach you, just as He set Eli to teach Samuel. I daresay Eli had other boys besides Samuel under his care; but, if there were others, we know nothing about them. We know only what passed between Eli and Samuel. The aged priest spoke well and wisely to his little pupil. And, if I were seeking for a good lesson to teach you in a very few words, I don't think I could do better than say to each one of you, 'My child, if God calls thee, say, Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth'. 'If God calls thee'—am I right in that 'If'? No, I think I am wrong; for there is really no 'if' in the matter. God is always calling you. I must say, 'When,' not 'If'. 'When God calls thee, say, Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.'

But you don't hear God calling, you say. I know very well that it has never happened to you, when you were lying all alone in the dark in the middle of the night, to hear God's voice speaking aloud to you, as Samuel did. But God speaks in many different ways.

I heard quite lately a story of a lad who came to a clergyman whom I knew to be prepared for Confirmation. The lad, who was at service in a farmhouse, was very ignorant, and did not even know how to pray. So my friend taught him, and told him not to mind the other men and boys, but to kneel down and say his prayers every night; for, if he was ashamed of doing this, he would be ashamed of Jesus, and would be denying Him before men. So he did as his clergyman told him to do, and kept to it too, though the others tried hard at first to prevent him and to laugh him out of it. At last one day he was sent by his master to a fair a long way off, and had to sleep at a public-house in the same room with some drovers, who were very rough and bad in their language. He thought at first there could be no harm in saying his prayers in bed that one night, and was meaning to do so, when something seemed to say to him, 'If you are ashamed of saying your prayers, you are ashamed of Jesus, and denying Him before men'. So he knelt down bravely, and, shutting his ears to the laughter and scoffs of the drovers, said his prayers straight through in his heart to God. Now, who spoke to that lad that night, and said, 'If you are ashamed of saying your prayers, you are ashamed of Jesus, and denying Him before men'? I have no doubt God spoke to him by His Holy Spirit. Of course he recollected what the clergyman had said to him, but it was none the less God speak-



ing to him. For God speaks through memory, and conscience, and reason, as truly as in any other way. He spoke to that lad through his memory. And he obeyed. He had learnt to say, 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth'; 'Tell me, Lord, what I ought to do, and I will do it'. And years afterwards, when that lad had grown to be a man, and had prospered in the world, he told my friend, whom he met by accident one day in a town a long way from where they had first known each other, that he owed all his blessings in this life to that one lesson which he had learnt when he came to be prepared for Confirmation—the lesson of simple obedience to God without caring what man might do or say.

A boy once in a school was trying for a prize, and not being clever at arithmetic, he could not do the sums set, and he was tempted to look secretly at the answers in a book he had with him, when the master's back was turned. By this means he got the highest marks, and would have had the prize. But something kept continually whispering to him, 'You are a cheat, and a thief, deceiving the master, and robbing the boy who deserves it of the prize'. And at last he could bear it no longer, but went to the master, and confessed what he had done, and so lost the prize, though he gained something better worth having, which was a quiet conscience. Now who spoke to that boy so loudly and clearly that he was forced to go and confess his sin? It was his conscience, some of you would say. Aye, but it was something greater than conscience. It was, in very truth, God calling to him through his conscience. And it was well for him that at last he heard and obeyed.

Once more, a little child once heard its father reading a chapter in the Proverbs aloud. In it were the words, 'My son, give Me thine heart'. The child did not listen to the rest of the chapter, but kept thinking about these words. They seemed to be ringing in its ears all day afterwards, and it could not forget them. And at night when that little child said its prayers, it said, 'Father, I give Thee my heart, to be Thy very own as long as I live'. Who spoke those words to that child's heart? They were read in the Bible, you say. Yes, but the Bible is God's Word. And God spoke to that little child through the Bible. And when the child heard God's call, it obeyed. I hope it never all its life long took back the gift it gave to God that night.

Oh! it is a happy thing to be always listening for God's voice, and always ready to obey it! May God give you an ear to hear and a will to do. As soon as ever God shows you what He would have you do, do it in a moment. He speaks to you sometimes in the silent voice of your own hearts; sometimes by His holy word, sometimes by His ministers, sometimes by the things He sends you, such as sicknesses, warnings, sorrows. If you will only listen you will hear Him speaking to you very often, and in all sorts of ways. Don't stop your ears and refuse to listen. Don't make such a noise

and clatter with the poor things of this world that you can't hear Him. Try your very best to find out what He would have you to do. Say to Him from your very hearts, 'Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth'.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 95.

### SAMUEL, THE MODEL OF EARLY PIETY

'And the Lord came and called—Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for Thy servant heareth.'—  
I SAMUEL III, 10.

**I. Samuel's Early Piety made him—'A Model of Usefulness'.**—Samuel became a *prophet* of the Lord, and was very useful in this way. He made known to the people of Israel what God wanted them to do, and taught them how they were to serve and please Him.

And then he was a *judge* as well as a prophet. He went out at stated times among the people, and settled their disputes and quarrels, and so he was the means of promoting peace and happiness among them. He did a great deal of good to the people of Israel in this way. And then, though Samuel was not a soldier, yet when the Philistines, their enemies, came against them in battle, he prayed to God for the success of the Israelites, and thus he was the means of obtaining a great victory for them. In addition to all this he was very useful as a teacher. He established schools that were called—'the schools of the prophets'. They were places where young men, who were going to serve God as prophets and teachers of the people, might learn about the duties of religion, and be trained and fitted for their work. And how much good was done to the people of Israel in this way no one can tell. And so we see that Samuel's whole life was one of usefulness in many ways. And all this grew out of his early piety.

And if we try to love and serve God while we are young, as Samuel did, it will make us models of usefulness as he was. We may not be prophets, or judges, like Samuel, but still it will be sure to make us useful. When we become Christians and learn to serve God, it will make us useful in a great many ways. Then, as the Apostle Paul says, we shall find that 'whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do,' we shall be able to 'do all to the glory of God'. No matter how poor we may be, or how young, we shall yet be able to make ourselves useful, and do a great deal of good.

**II. Samuel's Early Piety made him—'A Model of Happiness'.**—Religion is intended to make us happy. Loving and serving God is the secret of true happiness. We sometimes see persons who profess to be religious, but who have very long faces, and always look gloomy and sad. They do not understand what religion is. There is some mistake in their views of it. Samuel's piety did not make him sad and sorrowful. Although while he was young he had to live away from home, and only saw his father and mother once a year when they came up to worship God at the tabernacle, yet he was cheerful and happy. And

when he grew up to be a man he was always happy and cheerful. The people all loved him. They had confidence in him; and when they were in trouble they would come and tell him of it, and ask his advice about what they had better do.

When our Saviour was on earth, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, as we read in the fourth chapter of St. John, he compared true religion to a well of water, or a well of happiness in our hearts, 'springing up unto everlasting life'. This is the most beautiful definition of religion that ever was given. Samuel had this well of water in his heart, and no wonder that it made him happy. And if we learn to love and serve God while we are young, as Samuel did, Jesus will open up this well of water in our hearts; and then, wherever we may be, and whatever may happen to us, we shall always be happy. Religion is intended to make us happy. It is God's great secret of happiness, and no one can be truly happy without it.

**III. Samuel's Early Piety made him—'A Model of Perseverance'.**—To persevere means to keep on doing whatever we begin to do without giving up. One reason why some people never succeed in what they begin to do is that they do not persevere. They soon get tired and give it up. But this was not the way with Samuel. When he began to serve God he persevered in it. He kept on trying without getting tired. He never gave it up, but went steadily on with it. From that memorable night—'When little Samuel woke, and heard his Maker's voice,' until the day of his death he persevered in serving God. He went steadily on, trying always to do God's will, and to please Him in all things. And it was a long time in which he thus persevered. We have seen that Samuel was only eight or ten years old when he began to serve God. We are not told how old he was when he died. But it is probable that he was not less than ninety years of age at the time of his death. Then he must have gone on serving God for eighty years. That was a long time. And when we think of Samuel during all those years, as continually trying to serve God, and never getting tired or giving up, we may well speak of him as—'*a model of perseverance*'. And if we try to serve God when we are young as Samuel did, we shall be able to follow his example in this respect, and like him, we too, shall become models of perseverance.

But some may be ready to ask, 'How can we be sure of this?' I answer, 'Easily enough'. It was the grace of God which made Samuel pious when he was young; and which enabled him to persevere in serving God through all the years of his long life. And what the grace of God did for Samuel it is able to do for you and me. That grace, like God Himself, is Almighty. Whatever we have to do, we can do easily with the help of that grace. St. Paul said, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me'. He meant that he could do this by the help of God's grace. And this is just as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago when St. Paul was here on earth.

The grace of God makes hard things easy and crooked things straight. It enables us to go on in serving God as long as we live. It will make us like Samuel, models of perseverance. And it is the boys and girls who begin to serve God when they are young, and learn to persevere, who become the most useful.

Let us look at some examples of perseverance that may encourage us in trying to learn this very important lesson.

*The persevering boy.*—A good many years ago there was a poor boy in England who was learning to be a shoemaker. Before he got through with his trade he became a Christian. Then he made up his mind that whatever he attempted to do he would keep on, and persevere till he got through with it. Afterwards he determined to study for the ministry. He began his studies, and went on perseveringly with them till he got through.

After he was ordained he went out as a missionary to India. And he became one of the most useful missionaries that the Church ever had. He learned the language of the people among whom he preached. Then he made a grammar of that language. After this he made a dictionary. This dictionary filled up three large, heavy volumes. Then he translated the New Testament and different parts of the Old Testament into that language. This opened up the knowledge of Jesus and His salvation to millions of people in that country. The missionary of whom I am speaking was the celebrated *William Carey*.

Somebody asked Mr. Carey one day how he managed to get through with so much work. The answer he gave to this question is one that we should all remember. He said: 'I did it by plodding'. To plod means to keep on with anything we are doing till we get through with it. To plod is the same as to persevere. And so Carey the missionary in the great work he did in India stands before us as—'*a model of perseverance*'.

*The story of a bootblack.*—More than a hundred years ago, there lived a boy in the city of Oxford, in England, whose name was George. He was so poor that he used to clean the boots of the students at the University as the only means he had of getting a living. He was a Christian boy. He was very obliging and pleasant in his manners. He was warm-hearted and generous to all. The young men whose boots he blacked learned to love him. After a while when they found out that George wanted to become a student, they agreed to help him along. They found him very quick to learn and very persevering in his studies. He never lost a moment of time, but learned his lessons with the utmost diligence. He soon got to be one of the best students in the college. In this way he went on perseveringly till he got through. Then he studied theology and became a minister. Some of those who had helped him on when he began his studies made fun of him and persecuted him when they saw what an earnest Christian he was. But this did not move him. He was

firm as a rock. Nothing could change him. He went steadily on till he had finished his studies. Then he began to preach, and soon became one of the most eloquent and successful ministers in the country. So many people flocked to hear him that no church could hold them. Then he preached out of doors in the open fields, and sometimes there would be as many as twenty thousand people at one time listening to his preaching. He went about all over England and all through America preaching the Gospel of Christ, and doing an amount of good that never will be known till the last great day. This bootblack boy became the famous *George Whitefield*—the greatest preacher that the Church has known since the days of the Apostle Paul. *George Whitefield* was a model of perseverance.

I will finish this part of our sermon with a story of a *persevering bishop*.

One of these was *Bishop Doane*, formerly Bishop of New Jersey. On one occasion he was in New York trying to raise money for *St. Mary's College* at Burlington, where he lived.

He stayed there till the close of the week, intending to return home by the last train on Saturday evening. It was very important for him to reach home that evening, for he had an engagement to preach and hold confirmation the next day. A little while before it was time for him to start for the train a gentleman called to see him, who had some money to give him for the college. The bishop was very uneasy, for he was afraid he might miss the train. As soon as he could do so he excused himself to the gentleman, and hurried away to the railway station. But when he arrived there he found to his sorrow that the train had left about ten minutes before! The bishop was greatly troubled. He could not bear to think of not being in his place the next day. Many a man would have said: 'Well, it's not my fault. I did the best I could. I can't help it. I am very sorry not to be able to keep my engagement for to-morrow. But I must give it up.'

But *Bishop Doane* did not think, nor feel, in this way about it. He was a persevering man, and he resolved, if it was possible, to try and get home before Sunday morning. So he went to the agent and said: 'My friend, is there no other train that goes through Burlington to-night?'

'No, sir,' was the reply; 'no passenger train. There is a freight train that leaves here in about half an hour.'

'Very good,' said the bishop, 'suppose you give me a ticket on that train. I can sit on the engine, or on the platform in front of one of the cars. I have a very important engagement in Burlington to-morrow; and I must be there, if possible.'

'I would gladly do so,' said the agent, 'if I could. But it is against the positive rules of our company to take passengers on a freight train.'

'Well,' replied the bishop, 'I wouldn't on any account tempt you to break the rules of the company. But have you room for any more freight in this train?'

'Yes, sir, plenty.'

'Then put me on the scales, and see how much I weigh.'

The agent weighed him, and said, 'A hundred and seventy-five pounds.'

'What do you charge,' asked the bishop, 'for carrying that much freight?'

The agent told him. The bishop gave him the money and then said, 'Now put me in one of the cars, and *carry me to Burlington as freight*'.

This was done, and the bishop reached home in time for his engagement on Sunday.

**IV. Samuel's Early Piety made him—'A Model of Honour'.**—The Bible speaks of two kinds of honour. One is 'the honour that cometh from man,' and the other, 'the honour that cometh from God'. The first of these is not worth much. It does not help to make us good or happy. It is only an empty name. In England, for example, when the King wishes to give a man what is called 'the honour of knighthood,' he allows him to have the title of Sir written before his name. Thus, if his name was known as *John Smith*, he will, after this, always be spoken of as—*Sir John Smith*. This is considered a great honour, and men feel very proud of it. But when *Sir John Smith* dies this honour will all pass away. He will not be able to carry it with him into the other world. It is like writing a man's name on the sand by the sea-shore. When the next tide rolls over it, it will be all swept away.

But 'the honour that cometh from God' is very different from this. It is not a mere name. It is not the honour of what we *are called*, but of what we *are made to be*. It is something that will help to make us good, and great, and happy. And it is something that will last for ever. When the angel of Gabriel wanted to give *Zacharias*, the father of *John the Baptist*, an idea of the honour which belonged to him, he said: 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God' (*Luke i. 19*). He had the honour of standing close by the throne of God in heaven. He had this honour eighteen hundred years ago. He has this honour still, and he will have it for ever.

And so it was with *Samuel*. He had the honour of being the servant of God. He had the honour of speaking and working for God, when he was here on earth, more than three thousand years ago. And he has this honour still.—*RICHARD NEWTON, Bible Models*, p. 107.

#### THE SPRING OF THE DAY.

'And it came to pass about the spring of the day, that *Samuel* called *Saul* to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away.'—*1 SAMUEL IX. 26.*

VERY romantic were the circumstances in which *Saul* was called to be the first king of Israel. It was while he was seeking the strayed asses of his father, and had wandered far from home in search of them, over a region in which he was a complete stranger. Hearing that the prophet of Israel lived in one of the hill villages to the foot of which he happened to come,



he climbed up the steep slope and met him half-way. Samuel was told in a secret communication from the Lord that this was the man whom He had chosen to set over His people as their first king. The prophet asked Saul to stay with him all night in his house; and early in the morning he awoke his young guest from a sound sleep, caused by the great fatigue of the previous day, and together they started from the roof of the house by the stair that led down into the street.

The word used in our English Bible in speaking of this early start is very striking. The time is called 'the spring of the day'. In the original the word means a rising or growing up like water from a well, or a plant from a seed, or a branch from a tree. It means in the text the rising of the sun, or the 'day-spring,' as it is elsewhere called in Scripture. But I wish to use it in a poetical sense, and compare the early morning to the spring of the year. The time was to the day what spring was to the year. The diurnal revolution of the earth upon its own axis corresponds with the annual revolution of the earth round the sun, and the different periods of the day—morning, noon, and night—therefore resemble the different seasons of the year—spring, summer, autumn, and winter. According to this beautiful analogy the spring of the day embraces the early hours after sunrise. And what a delicious time that is! It is so like the spring of the year. Everything is fresh and bright as if new created out of the darkness of the previous night. The dew is sparkling in the eyes of the flowers just opening, and on the blades of the grass that shimmer in the level light. The air is cool and crisp, and the sky bends down to the earth with radiant beauty, and invests it with much of its own ethereal loveliness.

I wish to make that remarkable poetic expression which occurs in the narrative, the 'spring of the day,' the key of my discourse, and to derive from it some instructive lessons which it suggests.

I. The spring of the day was the best time for Saul's departure. It is the best time for the new departure of each day. Both mind and body refreshed by the sleep of the past night are recreated, made anew, full of fresh energy and new hope. All things seem possible in the magic dawning of the day. You can do more in the morning hours than at any other period of the day; and the quality of the work done then in the purer, calmer light will be finer, just as the flowers that grow in spring are brighter and fairer than those which grow later on. One hour in the morning is worth three in the afternoon. With the dawning of each new day you are summoned like Saul by a greater than Samuel to set out upon a new stage of your mortal journey. And God claims the spring of the day for Himself, for the refreshment of your soul, and for preparation for what may await you in the world.

II. The 'spring of the day' is the best time to devote the heart and life to God's service. Saul went down from the hill with the prophet to be anointed

King of Israel in the spring of the day, when his powers were at their very best. And so you, too, should depart from the world to God, from your old life of sin to a new life of heavenly love and devotion, in the spring of the day. You, too, are called to be anointed kings unto your God; and the best season for this is the springtime of your life. There are no such honoured and successful kings as those who are consecrated early to their high functions, who give their first powers and affections to the noble task of reigning over themselves and under Christ in the world, and helping to make the world the kingdom of Christ. Youthful piety is the most beautiful thing in the world. Never is religion so attractive as when you see it in some promising youth walking with happy steps in the path of innocence and peace. It is like the morning sun and the early dew, making life an Eden with its first fair love, with its prospects bright and assured for both worlds, for time and eternity. It is no Gilboa of defeat and death that ends a journey begun thus in the spring of the day, but a Pisgah from which the land that is very far off will be seen nigh, and the king in His beauty will transfigure the faithful soul into His own likeness.

III. But there is another departure in the spring of the day which is not joyous, but grievous. It is a departure down the hill of life into the dark valley of death. But if it is with God Himself, anointed in order to be crowned with the crown of life, then the grief is changed into joy. It was a favourite saying of the old Greeks that those whom the gods love die young. And there are many, weary and worn out with the long journey of life, who often think that they are best off who have finished that journey soonest, in the spring of the day. The death of the old, full of years, their work accomplished, gathered like ripe sheaves of corn into the garner, is according to the order of nature. But what shall we say of the death of little children, whose sun, as in an arctic summer, scarcely rises above the horizon when it dips below it again, or of those who have revealed to the inner circle of home the rare promise of their lives, and then closed up the bud in death? This seems a terrible waste. But often are the young taken away from the evil to come. Could Saul have foreseen the terrible ending to which his way led, on that eventful morning when he set out to be made a king, how gladly would he have laid down his life then and there, and prevented the dark fate that was coming! And could we in many a case foresee the dark future in this world from which an early departure is a happy deliverance, it would help to reconcile us to the spring frost which often intimately withers the lovely spring blossom. Many a fond mother would rather have seen her darling laid in his sweet innocence below the daisies, than have lived to see him grow up to be a curse to himself and to others. Our sorrow for the young, though it is more vivid and pathetic perhaps than any other kind of sorrow, is nevertheless 'a thornless sorrow,' for they have been called home ere they could share our fatal experience of guilt and

woe, and they have in an easy way become the inheritors of immortality.

For death as well as for life Jesus says to us, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven'.

There is hope of a new departure for those of you who have hitherto lived only for yourselves, in that lovely expression 'the spring of the day'. For just as each natural day is a miniature of the whole year, so each human day is a miniature of the whole of your life. And as God brings back to you the spring season of the year every morning in the natural world, so He brings back to you in the same way your youth each morning in feeling. And if, while mourning your wasted years, you wish earnestly to start anew upon the heavenly path; if you wish that your childhood could be restored in all its bloom and freshness in order that you might live no more to yourself but to God, He takes you at your word. He will bring back to you your youth again, not actually as the shadow of the degrees was brought backward on the dial of Ahaz, but by representation. Each day is life on a smaller scale. It has, as I have said, its infancy, its youth, its manhood, its decline: its spring, summer, autumn, and winter. This is not a mere poetic conception; it is a fact which you can turn to the most practical account. The morning of each day is the image on a small scale of your lost youth which you would fain bring back. Seek, therefore, to do on the small stage of the early morning hours what you ought to have done on the larger stage of your whole mispent youth. Lay bare your heart to the dew of God's grace, and to the pure fresh air and clear peaceful light of God's love. Hear the voice of your great Prophet and King who loved you and gave Himself for you, and who in the spring of the day is awakening you from the deep sleep of sin and calling you to arise and follow Him. And assuredly if you do this, He will give you the blessed anointing of grace, restore to you the brightness of your youth, and bring you crowned and blessed in the end to His own everlasting kingdom.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 9.

### JONATHAN'S VICTORY

'There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.'  
—1 SAMUEL XIV. 6.

Two years had passed since Saul came to the throne, and the Philistines were harassing the Israelites at every turn; Saul, therefore, determines to gather together a force and disperse them. He chooses 3000 men of Israel—1000 are placed under the command of Jonathan, and the remaining 2000 are led into the field by Saul himself. Jonathan, we read, marched his men against Geba and smote the Philistine garrison there. This gives rise to an immense army of Philistines coming together from every part to fight against Israel. Well might Saul and the people feel dismayed when they had to face 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen, and soldiers like the sand

upon the shore for multitude. It seemed as if Saul and his little army would be swept off the face of the earth. There seems no hope. The Israelites go and hide themselves in the caves, and thickets, and rocks: I can well imagine the scene. The country north of Jerusalem, about Bethoron, is very rugged and mountainous; one gorge leads into another, and the hill-sides abound in holes and caves. Here in these rocky fastnesses even the huge army of the Philistine would be at a disadvantage, and the Israelites are, for the time being, comparatively safe. But Jonathan isn't satisfied to leave them alone. His warlike spirit leads him on to strike a decisive blow, and in the narrative before us we see him and his armour-bearer as they arrange to go together against the great rocky garrison of the Philistines at Michmash. Jonathan has always seemed to me the very pattern of a noble soldier, of a man who knew not what it was to fear; of a man who had a most earnest trust and confidence in his God. Perhaps, of all others, he reminds us of General Gordon; Jonathan was a true friend, a stern warrior, a loving son, a God-fearing man. His life was one without fear and without reproach. No one could accuse him of insincerity. He lived, as far as he was able, a straightforward, manly life. And so we see the two warriors as they pass along one of the rocky gorges towards Michmash. They leave on the one hand the shining rock of Bozez, on the other the rocky height of Seneh, probably so called because of an acacia on its summit. They go forward up the ravine with the name of God upon their lips, the thought of God in their heart, and as they go they remember 'there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few,' and they are comforted. They seek a sign, and the sign is given by the foe. The Philistines see them approaching, and immediately begin to jeer at them and to say, 'Come up'. Therefore Jonathan presses forward and begins the slaughter. One after another the Philistines fall before his prowess, and the whole garrison is dismayed. The rocky nature of the ground would no doubt prevent more than a few attacking him at once, and so man after man is slain. Soon a panic rises amongst the others in the garrison, and they begin to be afraid. Then the earth trembles beneath their feet, and their fear becomes changed to terror and dismay; the very elements are fighting against them. The unseen God of the Israelites is working on behalf of His people, and so the flight commences. They turn and slay one another, and the rout is complete, and as we know is followed up by Saul and the people. What then was the cause of this wonderful defeat? Surely the Lord was with His people, and it matters not to Him whether he saves by many or by few. Jonathan, with the Lord of Hosts, is stronger than all the thousands of the Philistines.

I. Now I want to apply this story to your lives this morning. Let us see how far we are going forward against the enemy; how far we, like Jonathan, are going forth to the conflict relying upon God's

presence and help! Each one of us, with God with us, can withstand the world. Do we realise it? If we do, our lives must show the result:—

Strong in the Lord of Hosts,  
And in His mighty power!  
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts,  
Is more than Conqueror.

How far, then, is our life a conquering life? Only so far as we, like Jonathan, look to God, and say, The Lord will work for us. We cannot win the victory, God must win it for us. It will be helpful, then, to see how far we are like Jonathan, and how far unlike him. We are surrounded in our lives by temptation and difficulty, we have continually to come in contact with those who are in heart and life utterly regardless of God or of Christ. Many a time in our lives we have to decide whether we will serve Christ truly and suffer for His sake, or dishonour Him by denying our faith. Yes, over and over again have we to face this position, and there is no time that makes us feel more what cowards we really are.

II. *Cowardice* is a very real temptation to all of us. It is so easy to go with the stream. A dead fish can float with the current, it takes a live fish to stem it; and so we can drift with the current if we will, and deny our Master and Saviour. Some little time ago I made the acquaintance of a fellow who shortly afterwards enlisted. He was anxious to be a true follower of Christ, but when I went down to the barracks to see him he said, 'No, sir, I can't be a Christian here outwardly. I can't say my prayers in the barrack dormitory. There is only one fellow in the whole barracks who professes to be a Christian. I don't know what wouldn't happen if I was to openly follow Christ.' So I pointed him to the twenty-seventh chapter of St. Matthew, and said, 'Well, you and I will never have to suffer anything like what Christ suffered for us. We shall never have to be scourged, beaten, spat on, insulted, mocked, despised. Jesus endured these things for us, and yet we hesitate to endure a little for Him. Yes, old man, when we have to face a great temptation or difficulty, let us remember how great were the difficulties which our Lord went through, how real were the troubles which beset His earthly path. And as we remember this, let us be ready to endure a little hardness for His sake, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' He thought a bit, and then he saw I was right, and I really believe he got on better afterwards. We want to be so in earnest about our religion that, come what may, there may always be not only the resolve, but also the absolute practice of following the right. We often are much influenced by our surroundings, we are led by the opinions of others instead of being guided in all things by God's will. We are influenced by some friend to do that which is nothing more nor less than the violation of our consciences. Now, will all you fellows this morning consider with me an old motto? It is above the fireplace of an old manor-house, somewhere in the North of England. It is a motto which, if you will follow

it out to its just conclusion, will enable you to stand firm under any circumstances, to overcome all temptation, I care not what it be, to surmount every difficulty whether great or small. It is this: 'They say—What do they say? Let them say!' Its moral is a simple one. Whenever you and I know a thing to be right we must do it, whatever others may say, and however hard they may try to prevent us. Yes, if we do this we shall be able to endure hardness as good soldiers, we shall understand the happiness of living a true life. If others go the wrong way, we at any rate need not go with them. If others fall into sin, God will hold us up if we trust in Him. But now I can well understand that many of you here this morning can look back on just the opposite of this. You have had failure over and over again, you have sinned in thought, word and deed against your Heavenly Father. Yes, but if we have sinned there is a Mediator between God and man, even Jesus Christ, and as you and I look up to Him to-day, there is remission for the sins that are past. His blood has been shed to cleanse you of those sins of the past, and as you look up to the cross this morning, you can see written in golden letters above it the word *Forgiveness*. Yes, 'we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins'—so that God gives us a new start, and sends us forth with the past blotted out. And then there is the life which is before us. Think you that the arm of God is shortened, and that He will ever fail you—ah, no! 'I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, and will say unto thee, Fear not, for I will help thee.' Yes, we have His presence with us, 'There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few'. He is able to make me, like Jonathan of old, prevail over all the hosts of the enemy. Oh that we may all realise this and go forward as good Christian soldiers, to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world and the devil!

## DAVID'S CHILDHOOD; OR, THE BRAVE BOY.

I SAMUEL XVI.

OUR subject to-day is about David, when David was a boy. We will not think about David and the giant to-day, we will only think about David as a child; another time we will think about David slaying the giant.

Joseph was a faithful boy; Samuel was a useful boy; David was a brave boy. What are you?—a faithful boy? a useful boy? a brave boy?

There is an old picture. It is the picture of a Christian. In the picture there are three figures. One is a boy, and he has got a book in his hand, and he says, 'I learn!' The next is a boy, and he has got a spade in his hand, and he says, 'I work!' The third is a boy, and he has got a sword in his hand, and he says, 'I fight!' I learn; I work; I fight. Which are you saying of the three?—I learn? I work? I fight?

I do not think you could guess how many times



the name 'David' occurs in the Bible. How many times do you think? Three hundred and twenty-four. Three hundred and twenty-four times in the Bible there is the name of David.

Do you know what the name 'David' means? It means 'darling'. Perhaps he was called 'The Darling' because he was the youngest. He had nine brothers and sisters. He had seven brothers and two sisters. I should like you to know the name of one of his sisters, because I think a great many people make a mistake about it. One of his sisters was Zeruah. I think most boys and girls think Zeruah was a man. But Zeruah was the mother of those three great captains of David—Abishai, Joab, and Asahel. She was the sister of David.

David had a pious mother. How do I know that? Can anybody tell me why I say that David had a pious mother? You can look at the 116th Psalm. That is the only place I know of where we could tell that David had a pious mother. The sixteenth verse: 'O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid'. His mother was called the Lord's 'handmaid'. Then his mother was a good woman. He had a pious mother. Should you like to know the name of his grandfather? It was Obed. Or the name of his great-grandmother? for that is more important. Who do you think she was? Ruth. *Ruth* was his great-grandmother; *Obed* was his grandfather; and *Jesse* was his father.

Can you remember this? Who was his father? 'Jesse.' Who was his grandfather? 'Obed.' Who was his great-grandmother? 'Ruth.' How many brothers had he? 'Seven.' How many sisters? 'Two.' Was he the youngest? Yes; therefore he was 'the darling'.

I dare say, nay, I feel quite sure, that David very often thought of his dear mother, as I hope you all think of your dear mothers.

There was once a man who loved his mother, the Rev. Mr. Cecil, and he said all his life long it always did him good to say, 'My mother!' If anybody came to ask him to do anything naughty, he said, 'My mother!' If unhappy, he said, 'My mother!' It would do you all good sometimes to think of your mothers. Do not allow anything that you would not like your mother to know of, or your mother to see. 'My mother!'

David was born at Bethlehem. The oldest name for Bethlehem was (do you know?) Ephrath, and therefore it was sometimes called 'Bethlehem-Ephrath'. Afterwards the second name was dropped, except in poetry; it was called 'Bethlehem in Judah'. It was a small place then. Do you know that when David was an old man, he used to think about Bethlehem? And once he thought of a well of water there, and wanted to get some of it; he looked back and thought of the time when he was a little boy; and he thought about some water that was near the gate of Bethlehem, and he said, 'Oh, that I now could have a little water out of the well near where

I was born, out of the well of Bethlehem!' When you get to be an old man, by and by, in twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years' time, perhaps you will think about Brighton, and you will say, 'I remember where I used to live when a little boy, or girl'; and perhaps you will think about the things we are thinking of now. I wonder whether you will ever want some of the water you had when a little child. Perhaps you will say, 'I remember there was some nice water in Brighton'. Oh, I wish I could think that you would say, 'There used to be some nice water at the Children's Services. I wish I could have now some of the water I used to have in Christ Church, at the Children's Service.' What 'water' do you mean? Not water to drink; but some other water, 'the water of life'. 'Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is by the gate.' David's mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines in order to get it for him; and David then said, 'I won't touch it, because these three men have run the risk of being killed to get it for me. I will not taste of this water'. So 'he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord'.

Would you like to know what sort of a boy David was? Do you think he was tall or short? He was short. Do you think he was pretty? Very, very. Shall I tell you what sort of a boy he was? He had got very red cheeks, and he had auburn hair, and very soft eyes, very pretty eyes; but he was not tall. He was very nice-looking. I am sure he was nice. Now, what do you care for when you look at a pretty boy or girl? Do you care whether they have a pretty nose, or a pretty chin? I wish to see whether they look kind, clever, thoughtful, wise. That is true beauty. I do not think Jesus had a pretty face, but when men looked at Jesus' face, it always seemed so kind and good.

Do you think a boy or girl can be called good or bad by looking at the face? Let me see, can I tell whether you are good? I can a little. I will tell you what; there is a book written by a great man, called *Lavater Upon Faces*; and he tells a great many stories. I advise you to read that book some day. This is one of the stories he tells in that book. He says, 'There was a boy, and he was going to school for the first time, and when he said "good-bye" to his papa, his papa looked at his face and said, "My boy, all I ask of you is, when you come home from school for the holidays, bring back that face with you"'. I hope many of you will keep that face you now have. If you are naughty, you will lose that face, your face will change; but if you would keep an open countenance, be good, try to do your duty, and then you will always keep a good face. If I see you when you are big, when you are twenty, I hope I shall see that face.

I do not know whether you have ever read about a great painter, who went to Paris, and he said, 'I want to see the prettiest child in Paris, that I may paint a picture of him'. They found for him a

beautiful baby, and he painted the baby. A great many years afterwards he came again to Paris, and he said, 'Now I want quite a different thing, I want you to show me the ugliest, most disagreeable man in all Paris. Show me the ugliest man in Paris.' They said to him, 'You must come to the prison, then, and you will there find the ugliest man'. He said, 'Show me the ugliest man in the prison'. They took him to a prison in Paris, and showed him a horrid, ugly, dreadful-looking man, and he painted him; when, lo and behold! he found out that he was the same as the little pretty baby he had painted years before. He had grown up to be such an ugly man—he had led such a wicked life. So the pretty baby became an ugly man!

You will look ugly if you become proud, dishonest, untrue. You will no longer look like a pretty wax-doll; but you will get perfectly ugly. I am sure you will not keep a pretty face if you do naughty things.

This was David, then, when he was a boy. And his business was to keep his father's sheep. I suppose that is one reason why we find so much about sheep and shepherds in the book he wrote. What book did he write? 'The Psalms.' He says, in the 23rd Psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd'; then, in the 119th, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep'.

It was not considered a very honourable thing to be a shepherd. I believe, generally, the lowest servant kept the sheep. David did not mean that. It was his *duty* to do it.

Do you know that in ancient Rome there was a Temple of Honour? and the only way to go into that Temple of Honour was through the Temple of Virtue! Will you always remember that. Understand and remember it. I will repeat it to you. 'The only way to the Temple of Honour is through the Temple of Virtue!' The way to rise in life, to be really great, is to *do your duty*, from love to God. Then you cannot go very wrong.

I have read of a member of Parliament. A proud, silly man said to him, 'I know what you were when you were a boy. *You cleaned my father's boots.*' The member of Parliament replied, 'Yes, I did; and I tell you what—I *cleaned them well!*' That was a true gentleman's answer. That was a fine fellow's answer: 'I did clean your father's boots, and I cleaned them well'. So he rose to be a member of Parliament—a great man. He entered the Temple of Honour through the Temple of Virtue.

So we first read of David being a poor shepherd boy, and afterwards he went up to his throne.

When David was 'keeping the sheep,' a sad thing happened. 'There came a lion, and a bear'—will you look at the passage? It occurs where David was going to fight with Goliath (1 Sam. xvii, 34): 'And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his

heard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear.' I cannot quite make out how it was—can you?—whether the lion and the bear came together, and together took hold of one of the lambs; or whether, as some people think, it was once a lion, and at another time a bear, which came and took away each a lamb; or whether it was that the bear took him away, and then the lion came and took it out of the bear's paws. I cannot quite make it out—can you? Somehow or other the lion and the bear once took a lamb, and David slew them both. It was very courageous! Fancy a lion coming to you now—with one blow of his paw he could kill you! and then a bear, which would hug you so!

I knew a young lady who was once hugged by a bear. Near where she lived, in Somersetshire, there was a park, belonging to Ashburnham Court; and in the park there was a kennel, and she came there to sketch, and, thinking the kennel was empty, she put her drawing materials upon the kennel. She had no sooner placed them there, than there came out of the kennel a great bear, and hugged her; he took her in his arms and closely squeezed her. In God's great Providence, however, one of Sir John Smith's game-keepers, who was close by, came up, and with the butt-end of his gun he managed to make the bear let go of the young lady, and so she escaped. But it was a very narrow escape.

So there was very great danger to little David to see this great lion and bear coming out against him. Should not you be afraid? You need not fear.

A little girl once said, 'Fear!—who ever saw it?' 'What does fear look like?' said a boy. Can you all say that?

A poor woman once lived in a foreign town. She had a son. When the enemy was coming into the town, he was much frightened, and wondered what they should do. 'They will come into our house,' said he. 'Don't you be afraid,' said his mother, 'God has promised to be a "wall of defence" to us.' The boy said, 'A wall of defence? What does that mean? How can it be?' 'A wall to defend our house,' his mother replied. The boy was very much frightened. The soldiers came on in the night and killed a great many people, and there was much trouble in the city; but nobody came near this widow-woman's house. They did not hear a gun, and could not make out how it was that they did not hear the soldiers passing. How do you think it was? In the night God sent a tremendous shower of snow; and the snow drifted, and made such a drift that it got all round the poor woman's house, so that the soldiers in passing could not see the cottage. Thus God answered the widow's prayer, and gave a 'wall of defence' of snow, so that she escaped.

So David was not the prey of the lion and the bear.

Now I must tell you a little more about David. Do you know he could run very well, and he could leap very well, and he could shoot very well, and he could play music very well? 'How do I know this?'

you may say. 'Did I ever see it in the Bible?' Look at the eighteenth Psalm, verses 33 and 34: 'He maketh my feet like hinds' feet'—he could run like a deer or a goat—and setteth me upon my high places'. He could climb, get upon a mountain, stand in high places. 'He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.' He could draw a bow all of iron. Not many persons could use one; and he could break a bow in pieces, though made of iron! He could do everything well. I do not like boys and girls who only think about their books. They must think about being good runners, good leapers. A Christian should do everything well, and let people see that he can do so. Can you leap well? Can you run well? Can you climb well? Can you pull a bow? David could.

And he was also very musical. When Saul, the king, was very miserable—in a bad state of body and in a bad state of mind—then he wanted some one to come and play before him. And they sent to him David, the shepherd-boy, and he played before the king, and it awed the king. He could play music, and he used his music well. Are you musical? I hope you are. If you have any music in you, use it well. You can make others happy. That is the reason why young ladies at school should learn the piano, or ought to learn it, because it can make others happy, influence others. Use it in God's service. 'This is the only reason why any girl should learn the piano. She ought not to learn it without having it in her mind, 'Now I can use this music to make others happy'.

Luther, the great Reformer, loved music. He said he owed a great deal to music. When tired, music refreshed him. Good music keeps the temper right. I wonder whether all the people who play the piano, or sing, always have good tempers. It certainly does a great deal of good if you can turn your music to good uses. Go and play to a poor sick person, and so make poor people happy.

Music is a wonderful thing. Music will often put good thoughts into our minds, and take away the bad ones.

I will tell you a strange thing that happened. I think it was in India. There was a party sitting at dinner. Amongst them was a young lady. Whilst she was sitting at the dinner-table, and all the guests were looking at her, a great snake came in, and began to wind itself all around her. She was terribly frightened. A gentleman who understood these creatures, a wise man, said, 'Do not be alarmed; keep quite quiet; don't be afraid'. And he went to the piano and began to play upon the instrument. As he did so, the snake untwined itself from the lady and went away. This is quite true. The snake was fascinated by the music. You can do almost anything by music with a snake. Here was a snake, through the gentleman playing, uncoiling itself, going away, and doing no harm to anyone. I will tell you what—we have sometimes a very bad serpent twining itself around us. I mean the old serpent, the devil.

He gets into our hearts; and perhaps, if we sing a hymn, and so praise God in our music, and turn our music to good account, he will go. Try and get rid of a serpent by being musical.

One more thing about David. One day there was a sacrifice in Bethlehem, where David lived, and if you had been there that day you would have seen a strange sight; you would have seen the great man of the day, the greatest—Samuel, the great prophet. You would have seen him coming down to Bethlehem, driving a heifer. God had told him to do it, to offer it up in sacrifice. And when he came to the town, he called the chief person of the village and Jesse to the sacrifice, and he said to Jesse, 'I am come to see your sons. God hath sent me.' Then 'Jesse made his sons to pass before Samuel'. First Eliab, then Abinadab, then Shammah. They were very tall, fine-looking men, and Samuel said, 'These won't do. God will not look upon the outward appearance, but on the heart. Have you anybody else?' 'Yes,' said Jesse, 'I have the youngest, the darling, David.' 'Send for him,' said Samuel. So they sent for him. When David came, Samuel said, 'This is the one that God hath chosen. He is to be king.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren, to be king; but not then—by and by. *So God chose David to be king.*

Now, I want to ask you a very important question. Does God choose us, or do we choose God? I want everybody to think. This is one of the thinking questions. Does God choose us, or do we choose Him? I wish you to tell me. Which comes first? God chooses us first, and then He puts it into our hearts to choose Him. It all begins with God. God chooses us. This is very wonderful.

Now, you know these are very deep things we are talking about—about God choosing us. It is a very difficult subject.

I will tell you about a friend of mine. He was a doctor in London. His name was Mr. Merryman. He had a large Bible-class of young men, and he lived near Hyde Park. One day one of the young men went to him, and said, 'I want you to explain to me, sir, all about election'—that is, about God choosing us, for that is what it means. Mr. Merryman did not appear to take any notice of the question, but went on talking to the young man about other things. At last he said to him, 'John, have you been bathing lately?' 'Yes, sir,' was the reply. 'Where?' 'In the Serpentine.' 'I suppose, John, you go into the water down by the mill?' 'No, sir; it is too deep water for me there. I never bathe in deep water.' Mr. Merryman said, 'Now, John, do with your religion as with your bathing. Never go into waters too deep for you.' Do you understand?—thoughts too deep for us, too deep for the oldest and wisest men that have ever lived!

There are many things we cannot understand. We must be very careful about these.

It is very comforting that God first chooses us. I wonder whether he has chosen you? You are born



in England—happy country! You have been baptised; you go to religious schools; you have many privileges and blessings. Do you think God has chosen you? I wonder whether He has chosen you to be His child?

There was an old woman who said rather a funny thing; but there was a great deal of truth in it. She said, 'I think God must have chosen me before I was born, for He never would have chosen me afterwards'.

There is some truth in that remark; but it is a very deep and delicate subject. Only this we know—if, at the last great day, when Jesus comes, He places you on His right hand—where I hope you will all be, at God's right hand—then this is what He will say to you: 'How did you come here?' You will have to say, 'God chose me. I did not deserve it. God chose me. It was His love and favour all along. I was a poor miserable sinner; but Jesus did it all. It was all God's love.'

If you are on the left hand—God forbid it! I hope nobody here will be on the left hand when Jesus comes. If so, and anybody says, 'Why are you here?' you cannot say, 'Because God did not choose me,' but, 'When told to be good, I would not. I would not obey my conscience. I would not come when God called me. I wilfully, of my own wicked self, went wrong. I would do wrong. So I am here on the left hand.'

On God's side it is all choosing love. And on ours, can you think what it is? Is it all love there?

These are deep subjects. But I like to think, 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever'.—J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (5th Series), p. 1.

### GOD'S CHOICE

'But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.'—1 SAMUEL XVI. 7.

**The Heart Deceitful.**—In one place God has said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked'. Deceitful, what does that mean? To pretend to be what you are not, and for no good purpose, is it not? The heart is so deceitful, that we actually deceive ourselves sometimes, and we don't think we are so wicked as we are. How deceitful we are in little things sometimes, or in what we call little things.

Let us take another example. Your governess or your master goes out of the room, and you commence playing and talking. Oh, what a buzz there is directly! the room is like a bee-hive, only bees buzz over their work, and you buzz over your play; and presently a footstep is heard, and the door opens, and then you are all as quiet as mice, pretending that you have been working hard all the time; and if the deception is successful, master or mistress thinks what good children you are. What does God think

about it? His eye has never left the room. He has been present all the time. Has He seen you guilty sometimes?

We kneel down in church, and those sitting near think what nice devotional young people we are, and how earnestly we are praying. God may know that, although our heads are buried in our hands, we are thinking about all sorts of things, and that there is not one earnest thought going up to the throne of grace. How frequently we sin and mock God on our knees. We say our prayers at night. Do we mean anything by them? Do we desire God to answer them? You have said 'the Lord's Prayer' ever since you can remember. You pray in it, 'Thy kingdom come'. Are you ready for 'Christ's kingdom' to come? If Jesus were to answer your prayer, and come to reign, have you on the 'wedding garment' to reign with Him?

Do you want His kingdom to begin in your own heart? Are you really willing that He should set up His throne there, and reign there altogether? or are you still wanting to have your own way, and go on doing as you like? If you are not prepared for His coming in any sense, how can you pray 'Thy kingdom come'?

Again, 'Forgive us our trespasses'. How? 'As we forgive them that trespass against us.' Is that really the way you want God to forgive you your trespasses? Do you forgive your brothers and sisters freely, and all your young friends and your enemies? Do you forgive them all from your heart, and with all your heart? or are there any who have said naughty things, or told stories about you, or done something to hurt you, and you have not quite forgiven them? You will be lost if God only forgives you in the same way. Don't mock God on your knees. God hears the words, but He looks into the heart.

'She is Rotten Still.'—One day I went off to a large ship which had anchored in our roadstead to seek an opportunity of holding service with the crew. She was lying a long way out, and we had a long sail to get to her. As we neared her we saw that her back had been broken, and my first impression was, 'What a dirty, rotten-looking thing, and what a name for such a ship'. She was called after a great philanthropist, who might have wept to have seen his name on such a ship. As I stepped on her deck, I saw evidence that a great deal of pumping had been going on. I saw the officer in charge, and found that the men had mutinied, and were not at work, but the mate added, 'We are keeping them on short allowance, which will soon bring them to their senses'. I went into the dirtiest of forecables, where I found the men in a miserable condition, and not very amiable. After a little while, however, I succeeded in praying with them about their trouble and themselves, and gave them an address. They were very attentive, and begged me to come again.

I found whilst on board, that the ship had been pumped across the Atlantic, sometimes by an old

farm engine placed on the deck, and when that would not work, by the men; and that these poor sailors refused to pump this rotten thing any further. When we went off to her again, about three days afterwards, we found she had been painted all round on the outside, and was now looking very clean. I said with a laugh to my Scripture reader, 'She looks better now'. 'Yes, sir, she does,' he replied; 'but she wanted carpenters, not painters; in fact, she is too bad to repair. But we will soon see what paint will do.' So saying he took his knife out of his pocket, and ran it into her side. 'There, sir, the rotten timber is there all the same notwithstanding the paint; she is rotten still.'

We talk of doing better, and turning over new leaves. What are they like? Only like the coat of paint on the ship. We go to church, and make out to be Christians, and it is only like painting that ship; the rotten timber is left behind. We are 'rotten still,' and it is no use trying to patch ourselves up. We want a new heart, and not the sin-stained, deceitful heart painted by outward forms and sham religiousness. Sometimes we are like the ship; we have a good name, but it is all a sham. Are you not sadly disappointed sometimes when you buy a beautiful rosy apple, and find it all rotten inside? You would not have bought it if you could have seen inside, would you? God looks inside, and He refuses us, and our praise, and our work, if the heart is not right.

That ship was no safer because she was painted. A land-man would not have gone as a passenger in her before she was painted, but he might have done so afterwards. So sometimes we are doing more harm by professing to be Christians if we are not; others copy us, and are led into the same danger.

As God looks into your heart now what does He see? A desire to give up yourself to Him entirely. Is that it? Do you want to be a true Christian—a real servant and child of God—to know what real and true happiness is? Are you willing that God should take your sins away in the blood of His own dear Son? God is far more willing to do it than you are to have it done; more willing to forgive you than you are to be forgiven; more anxious about you by far than you are, or ever can be. Kneel down and confess your sins to Him. Tell Him how deceitful your heart is, and that you would like Him to wash it white, and forgive you all. Go to Him at once, 'to whom the secrets of all hearts are open, from whom nothing is hid,' and He has promised—'A new heart will I give you'.—J. STEPHENS, *Living Water for Little Pitchers*, p. 76.

#### DAVID

'Arise, anoint him: for this is he.'—I SAMUEL XVI. 12.

A MAGIC charm lingers round the life of the son of Jesse—a charm which is all its own.

I. First, David is one of those few characters in the Bible which are presented to us as a historic

whole; we gain an insight into a life from its beginning to its end, a life worked out and laid bare from the cradle to the grave. It is the history of a complete human life.

II. But the special interest with which the life of David is invested does not end here. It is not only its completeness but its poetic character which arrests the reader. It possesses all those elements of vicissitude and adventure which attract us even in fiction, but which, when met with in real life, fascinate and enthral.

The life of David is at once an epic and an idyll. The shepherd boy made favourite, warrior, statesman, poet, king—it is a transmutation which loses none of its attraction, nay, which gains immeasurably in intensity and power, when we remember that he was a man after God's own heart; it is a romance of real life which charms our childhood, lends wings of aspiration to our boyhood, gives strength to our manhood and solemnity to old age; and perhaps a more human interest is added to the story when we find that a life consecrated to God was not untouched by the human frailties which encompassed it, nay, was even embittered and poisoned by the breath of sin and shame.

Behold him, then, the shepherd boy, lying in the highlands of Bethlehem, gazing up at the stars, those nightly sentinels which kept solitary watch with him, and far beyond into the overarching canopy of blue infinitude in which those glowing worlds were set. What waking dreams can we imagine this lonely boy to have dreamt; what floods of fancies poured over his soul! All had voices for him, and all spoke of God. 'One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.' And as the faint grey streak of morning broke upon the everlasting hills, he saw the sun come forth 'like a bridegroom out of his chamber,' making rainbows of the mountain-brooks, and scattering dowers of gold on the awakening earth. And, lonely in space but not in spirit, he dwelt with the great Creator, and learnt on those solitary uplands (we cannot doubt it) those spiritual impulses which quickened and deepened his after life.

III. But I hasten on to touch briefly on another aspect of David's life—his friendship with Jonathan.

'Pleasant hast thou been to me, my brother Jonathan: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.' I call this a landmark, for it was the arousal of a new feeling; and if there is much of an epic in David's career, here, I think, we may venture to trace an idyllic touch. After a home existence in which he finds seemingly nothing but uncongenial society, unrecognised ideas, he starts as it were here into a new life; the spontaneous activities of a heart yearning for affection are suddenly awakened into being by the discovery of corresponding sympathies in another; and love burns with an intenser and purer flame, because hitherto it has been denied access and air.

Now, this is no new experience. There is no form of human suffering more common, more intense, and refined and nameless in its agony, and more injurious to the moral fibre of the sufferer, than that of being misunderstood; and as long as tact, that Divine combination of head and heart in which all the virtues meet, remains a rare jewel in the world, as long as human sympathies are cramped in extent and warped in their expression, as long as men have coarse souls, so long will such suffering rank among the most tragic and yet common of earthly burdens.

But the mutual love of David and Jonathan was of that tender kind which defies analysis, but which rests on the only basis on which the highest love of any kind can ultimately depend—the almost passionate desire for each other's highest good.

Cherish, then, the friendships of your school days as peculiar gifts which God has granted to you on whom the grip of the world and of worldly things has not yet fastened. Feelings gain perhaps in depth and force, but not in freshness or width of sympathy, as we grow in years; and the seared heart of the man beats once again with renewed youth, the pulse is stirred again to the long-buried emotion, as he clasps again the hand of an early friend, and the tender memories of a day long dead wake into life at the sound of the well-nigh forgotten voice.

One more scene in David's life and I have done. I pass over all the dangers from secret or open foe, all the wanderings amid the fastnesses and rocks of his future kingdom by the proscribed exile; I turn over the pages which mark him as a king, the death of Saul, the overthrow of rebellion, the assurance of his empire, till I pause at that chapter where, after his one great sin, God strikes him down, and he sits by the body of his dead child, and utters that cry of resignation, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me'. David as a mourner. I do not ask you to regard the sorrow as the result of sin. Suffering is not always, though it was in David's case, the result of sin; very often it stands quite apart, arising from causes utterly beyond our own control, and evidencing the mysterious ways in which God deals with the great human family whose destinies are hid in His eternal, all-seeing mind from the beginning of the world.

Sometimes the shadow that waits for all men knocks at the door of a fair young life, as it did to David's dead child, and we must go, whether we be ready or unready. As we fall on our knees this night, let us pray God to make us ready, that when the summons comes, he be in the first or in the second watch, or in the third, it may find us waiting for the Master's call; and if so be that before us some one near and dear to us has been taken to his rest, we may cry with David, with a subdued voice of resignation, not a wailing of despair, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me'.—H. B. GRAY, *Modern Laodiceans*, p. 114.

## THE FUNCTION OF CHILDREN

'And it came to pass when the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.'—1 SAMUEL xvi. 23.

This is the function of children, the main use they are of, the purpose they serve and are intended to serve: they renew the youth of the world. They bring courage, cheerfulness, hope, love, to hearts that are growing weary and sad, or that might grow weary and sad and selfish but for them.

And I do not know where we could find a better illustration of this function than in the story of which my text forms part. God intends you children, each one of you, to do for your parents and friends what David did for Saul.

King Saul had grown weary of the world. The toils and cares of rule, of war, and, above all, the memory of his own faults and sins, had made him moody and melancholy, and at times drove him almost, if not altogether, mad. In his fierce dangerous moods he hardly knew, or cared, what he did. And to this tall, swarthy, stalwart man, this moody, passionate, dangerous king, there comes a lad, short in stature, slender in form, with fair hair, large beautiful eyes, and a ruddy countenance (1 Sam. xvi. 12; xvi. 42); a lad so bright and comely that the sacred historian lingers admiringly on every feature of his person. 'This bright comely David, or 'Darling'—for that is what the word 'David' means—comes into the King's tent, with a rustic harp in his hand, a harp which he had made, or at least had learned to play, while he kept his father's sheep, and sings to him the sweetest songs—songs of pastoral life, songs of war and triumph, songs about the care and love of God—till he wakens some responsive chords in the fierce King's breast, and calls him back from the wild lawless heats of passion, to the order, and calm, and peace of pure and innocent thoughts, of a firm and steadfast will. David plays with his hand, and *Saul* is refreshed and well.

I. David did his work very thoroughly, although it was very lowly work for him to do. His father, Jesse, was the chief man, and judge, of the village of Bethlehem. His brothers, most of whom seem to have been a good deal older than he was, were men of some consideration—great tall fellows, very quick with their hands, likely men to make good soldiers and to win honour. But David, though he was called the Darling, was treated rather scurvily, I think; his very father treating him more like a servant than a son. He was set to keep sheep, an office which in his time and country was usually allotted to slaves, or to servants of the lowest class. To be a shepherd was poor work for the son of a well-to-do and much respected man; poor work for a bright gifted lad who was worth far more than all his brothers put together. But, poor as it was, David did it well. As he must be a shepherd, he resolved to be a good shepherd. He *was* a good shepherd, and was ready to lay down



his very life for the sheep. He had often to use his sling and stone against birds and beasts of prey. And once, as we know, while still a mere lad, he fought a lion and a bear who came down from the hills, or up from the thickets of the Jordan, to harry his flock. And all work is good work so that it be well done. It matters very little *what* we do, if it be our duty to do it; but it matters very much *how* we do it.

Most of you have some work to do; girls in helping their mothers about the house—at least I hope your mothers are wise enough to teach you household work: boys, some of you at least, in earning your own livelihood, and others in school tasks and home tasks. And, no doubt, some of you think the work you have to do beneath you, not good enough or important enough for such clever and promising young people as you are. Perhaps you do it unwillingly, and grumble over it, and think you were cut out for better things. And, perhaps, you were. But if you take your work in that spirit, *you* are not doing much to make life bright and the world more cheerful, whether for others or for yourselves. Whereas, if you do your work heartily and cheerfully, you will not only add to the happiness of those who love you; you will also fit yourselves for better work, *and put yourselves in the way of getting it*. I have known many a lad rise into the best work he was fit for by doing lower kinds of work diligently and cheerfully; but I never knew even one who rose by neglecting his work, or despising it, or grumbling over it.

Do your work well, then, whatever it may be, as well as you can; and you yourself will be the happier for it, and will help to make the world about you happier and sweeter. Even the Lord Jesus was a carpenter, and spent some years in making ploughs and carts, and the commonest kinds of tables and chairs. That does not seem very fit or dignified work for *Him* to have had to do. And yet, are you not quite sure that He did it well, that there were no better made chairs and tables, or carts and ploughs than his in all Galilee?

II. While doing his work well, David sought to cultivate and improve himself. It was while he was a shepherd that he grew so skilful in playing on the harp as to be able to minister to the diseased mind of Saul. It was while a shepherd that he trained himself to discover a beauty in the stars, in the woods, in the fields, in trees and flowers, which afterwards entered so largely into his psalms that men love to read them to this day. And there are few *vocations* which have not their appropriate *avocations*: that is to say, there is hardly any kind of work you have to do as a duty which does not train, or does not afford you leisure to train, some faculty or gift by which you may hereafter minister to the welfare or the pleasure of your neighbours.

III. Last of all: while David did his work well, and cultivated his gifts diligently, he gave himself to the service of God. It was *the Lord* whom he served,

he said, that delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. What struck the servants of Saul most in him was that '*the Lord* was with him'. 'He is very skilful,' they said to the King, 'and very brave, very prudent and very comely: *and the Lord is with him.*' And, surely, a lad must have been noted for a simple and sincere piety of whom that was the last and chief thing to be said.

There are many ways, as you have been hearing, in which you may contribute to the pleasure of your parents and friends, and help to make both their life and your own sweeter and brighter; *but there is no way so good as being good*. The one thing they most desire for you, because they know that nothing else will make you so happy and so useful, is that you should love God and serve Him and trust in Him, and let Him save you from sin and danger.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 99.

## THE YOUTH AND THE GIANT

I SAMUEL XVII.

I ONCE had a servant, and his name was Samuel, and I said to Samuel one day, 'Samuel, do you read your Bible?' Samuel said, 'Yes, sir'. I said, 'Do you read your Bible every day?' He said, 'Yes, sir'. I said, 'Did you read your Bible this very day?' And he said, 'Yes, sir'. I said, 'What part of the Bible are you reading now?' He said, 'I always read the same chapter, about David and Goliath'. I think Samuel must have known about David and Goliath very much! We are going this afternoon to think about David and Goliath.

We left David at Bethlehem; and I think it was very greatly to David's honour, that, though he was anointed to be king, yet he kept on his duty as a shepherd-boy. I have known some boys who say, 'Oh, it is beneath me'. I hope no boy or girl will ever say that about anything except what is bad. *Nothing is beneath a Christian!*

I think there was one of his sheep that David loved more than all the rest of the sheep. Do you know which sheep that was? I think it was the sheep that he had taken from the lion and the bear. Would not you? If you had fought that great lion and bear and dragged a lamb out of their claws, don't you think you would always have liked that lamb afterwards? Ah! whom does Jesus love best? The lamb that he has delivered from the lion, the great lion, the roaring lion, the devil! If there is anybody in the Church whom Jesus has delivered from the roaring lion, Jesus loves that lamb very much.

While David was keeping his father's sheep at Bethlehem, there was a great thing going on a few miles off, near to Jerusalem, a place called Epheddamim. In this place there were two mountains, and a valley lay between the two; and every day, for a great many days, there came down from one of

the mountains a great giant, and he walked into the valley, and he challenged anybody to come and fight him. The Israelites were on one mountain and the Philistines on the other. This giant came down every day, and said, 'Who will fight me?'

Now, how tall do you think Goliath was? He could not have walked under that gallery. If he had tried to walk under that gallery without his helmet on, he would have knocked his head, for he was one foot higher than that gallery; he was ten feet and a half high. That gallery is nine feet and a half high. And his helmet was very tall too. He was the greatest giant we ever read of. A very great giant came from China a long time ago; but Chang was only seven feet eight inches high. In an old book, written by Pliny, an old Roman author, he says in his day there was a wonderful giant, and he was nine feet nine inches high. But Goliath was taller than that, for he was ten feet and a half high. The weight of the coat of mail that he wore was a hundredweight and a half. It is difficult to fancy what that is. Could you fancy it? Did you ever carry one pound of tea or a pound of sugar? If you were to carry 168 pounds of sugar that would be to carry a weight as heavy as Goliath's coat of mail; nobody could carry it. He had also a great spear and a great sword. He was a terrible fellow! So he came every day and challenged the Israelites—'Who will fight me?'

At this time, you know, David was a shepherd-boy, keeping sheep at Bethlehem. One day his father said to him, 'I want you to go and see your brothers, who are with the army fighting with the Philistines. Take them corn and bread, and take their captain some cheese: see how they are, and bring me back their kind messages, and their pledge.' So David—though he was going to be so great a man, going to be a king, and though he was very brave, and very strong, and a fine fellow—yet he did not object to going on a message. He might have said, 'It is not my business; send some one else'. But though he knew his elder brethren would be very unkind to him, say something cross to him, yet he went. But he was very meek and gentle—like all brave boys and girls; they are generally meek and gentle. It is the cowardly ones who are not meek and gentle; they are always boisterous; but the valiant in war are the fondest and truest in love. It is always so.

When David came to the army, he talked with the people who were there, and 'left his carriage,' that means, 'the things he was carrying'. It sometimes means 'the thing which carries us'; but here, 'what was carried,' as in the fifteenth verse of the twenty-first chapter of the Acts, 'We took up our carriages'. If you were carrying a bundle, that would be 'your carriage'. So David left his parcel, or bundle that he was carrying, and went and spake to the men that stood by him. And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard him speak, and was very unkind to him. He said to him, 'I know that it is only in pride and vanity that you have left those few sheep in the wilderness, and

have come down here just to please yourself, and be idle and see the battle!' But David was too gentle to quarrel. He would fight manfully in his duty, but he would not quarrel.

I have read of two old men—I should like to tell you about them; they had lived together a great many years, and they never had a quarrel. One of the old men said to the other one day, 'Let us try and see if we cannot have a quarrel, just like all other people do. Why not be like everybody else?' The other said, 'I do not know how to quarrel'. The first one said, 'I will put a brick down there, and I will say, "That is my brick," and you shall say, "No, it is mine," and so we will have a pretty quarrel about it.' So he got a brick, and, putting it down before the other old man, he said, 'That is my brick'. The other said, 'No, it is mine'. And then the first one said, 'No, it is mine'. Then the second one said, 'Well, if it is yours, you had better take it!' So they could not quarrel. That is the way.

David was very meek and gentle, though a brave fellow. He said to the men, 'I will fight that giant'. They all laughed at him—'You cannot fight him'. But they went and told the king, 'Here is a young fellow who says, "I will fight this great giant"'. And the king sent for David, and he told him he was 'not able' to fight the giant. But David said he would fight him. Then Saul said, 'Well, you may, if you like.' So he took off his armour to put on David. But David would not keep on that armour. He said, 'I have not tried it'. Yet David said, 'I will still fight the giant'.

What made David so brave? I want to talk to you about that. I hope you are all wishing we may not have a war with Russia. You do not wish a war, do you? What would become of all the poor children if we did? I should advise you to pray every day that God will let us have peace, and not war, because war is a dreadful thing! God likes to answer the prayers of children. I don't want you to think, to-day, anything about that war. But there is another war.

There was a king of Africa, a long time ago; he once said to his chiefs, 'I should like to find out the town which first went to war, and if I could find that, I would gather together all my people against that town, because it was the first to go to war'. He was a wise man. I am rather surprised that in Africa, where generally they love war, a king should have wanted to destroy the town where first the people began to make war in the world. One of his chiefs said to him, in reply, 'I know the place where war began, but don't think you can take it; I don't think you can destroy it. I will tell you the place where war began. It was *in man's heart*. That was where all war began. I am afraid that is a town you cannot take.' So the African king found he could not take the town where war first began.

I hope you are all warriors. I want to speak of you as warriors in another war. May I speak to you and call you warriors? Are you warriors?

Little Frank went up to London to spend some time with his grandpapa, who was very kind to his grandson; he took him all about London, showed him all the sights, and his grandpapa talked very nicely to him about everything. They walked along till they came to the Horse Guards. At the gates, there are always two great soldiers on horseback: they are very tall, fine-looking fellows. I have often seen them. They have a coat of steel before their breasts, called a cuirass, and they wear a great brass helmet with white plumes; they have white gloves, and they sit on black horses. When I was a little boy I was told (and I believed it) that there was only a certain quantity of movement allowed to the horse, and the man on the horse; and I thought the man was so very kind, for he let the horse have the right to make all the movement allowed, while he did not even move his little finger.

Little Frank was looking at the soldiers on horseback at the Horse Guards, when his grandpapa said to him, 'Frank, these are warriors!' Frank thought to himself, 'You need not tell me that; I know it'.

A little farther off, you know, there is the Admiralty. There they saw a man in very large blue trousers, almost big enough for two or three men; he had got on a black hat, reaching halfway down his neck. He was a sailor just coming out of the Admiralty. His grandpapa said, 'Frank, this is a warrior'. Frank said, 'Yes, I know that; he fights at sea'.

A little farther on, they came to Westminster Hall. As they went by, there was a man going in, wearing a black gown, and a large powdered wig, curled all over; and he was going in very fast. Grandpapa said, 'Frank, that is a warrior'. But he could not understand how this man could be a warrior. But his grandpapa repeated, 'He is a warrior'.

They walked a little farther, and there came up, in a nice carriage, to a large house, a well-dressed gentleman; his servant, who was with him, made great haste to get down from the carriage, and rang the bell of the house-door. The gentleman got out of the carriage, and went into the house very quickly. Frank's grandpapa said to him, 'That is a warrior!' Frank could not make it out at all.

They went on, and there was a church close by, near Westminster Abbey, St. Margaret's Church. There was an old gentleman there, all dressed in black; he had a white tie round his neck. The old gentleman looked very grave, and, as he was going into the church, his grandpapa said, 'Frank, that is a warrior'.

Frank could not stand it any longer, and he said to his grandfather, 'Do explain to me how these men are all warriors'. 'Well,' he said, 'the man at the Horse Guards is a soldier, a warrior; the man at the Admiralty, he is a sailor, and he is a warrior too. And the man going into Westminster Hall was a lawyer, and he is a warrior, because he has to defend right and justice, and try to put down all that is

wrong and wicked in the world. And the man who got out of the carriage, he was a doctor, and he has to fight against sickness and illness, to keep people from being unwell. The gentleman going into the church, with a black dress and white tie, is a warrior too. Every clergyman is a warrior, because he has to fight against sin and wickedness, and to defend truth, to defend God's honour. These are all warriors.' Then, turning to Frank, he said, 'Now, Frank, you are a warrior, because you have got to fight a battle'.

You are all warriors; so I speak to you all now and call you so. I want to teach you to fight, and to tell you what you are to fight for. Soldiers, and sailors, and lawyers, and doctors, and clergymen, and boys, and girls, all have to fight.

Now, what made David so brave? What did he say to Saul? Two things. One was, he recollected how God took care of him with the lion and the bear: so he thought He could take care of him now. He thought of the mercies of the past. The next thing he thought of was this: 'Goliath is God's enemy, the enemy of God's people; therefore God is on my side. *God will fight with me.*' So he was not afraid. Those were the two things that made him so brave.

So David went, and he took his 'sling' with him. Do you know what sort of 'sling' it was? There are different sorts. It may be made of a thong of leather, or a piece of plaited string: you put the stone in the middle where it is made broad; you hold both parts in your hand, whirl the string round, then let one part loose, and the stone will fly. It was that kind of sling, I believe, that David had. And he took with him 'fivesmooth pebbles out of the brook'. It was quite right for him to take the stones and the sling. It would not have been right for him to say, 'God will give me the victory, even if I do nothing'. Wellington's advice or command to his soldiers was, 'Say your prayers *but keep your powder dry!*' It would not do to say your prayers, and have your powder wet; the guns would not go off. *Use the means.* 'Say your prayers and keep your powder dry.' Take all you can, do the best you can. So David took the sling and the pebbles.

And then you remember the great giant's horrible look. He gazed savagely at him: 'Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? Come to me, and I will kill thee. And I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field.' David's, you will remember, was a noble answer: 'Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and will take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall



know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands' (1 Sam. 17-18). *God will show who is the strongest.*

You know that one of the pebbles killed the giant. I don't know whether he had, by mistake, not put his visor down, so that his forehead was left uncovered, or whether there was a little hole in the visor that the stone could go through; but God managed it so that the pebble could go through his armour into his forehead, and he fell down dead. Then David went and stood upon the giant, and took his heavy sword and cut off Goliath's head. So he perished.

Now I want to speak to you about *your war*. Who is *your Goliath*? What Goliath have you to fight with? You have one. You have a giant to fight with.

Thomas, what is *your giant*? John, what is *your giant*? Elizabeth, what is *your giant*? Mary, what is *your giant*? So I might go through all the names.

I might say, perhaps, your giant is a bad temper; you are often angry, you do not speak the truth, you are prone to lying; I might say it is idleness, or irreverence; but I do say *your giant is self*. Satan cannot hurt you, and no one can enter into the castle—if there is not a traitor inside. But if there is a traitor within the heart, the castle is sure to be taken. All the Goliaths in the world would be unable to destroy you if there were not a traitor inside to open the gate and let the enemy in. *Self is your giant*.

Now, if you are to fight against this great giant, the sin in your own naughty heart, how shall you do it? What shall be your 'five stones'? I have been trying to think, and I find it very difficult to do so. What is like the five pebbles? Some great writers say they mean the two Sacraments, the Bible, prayer, and meditation. The Roman Catholics say, 'It is the Sacraments'. But what shall we say? I will think of what David said to Saul.

The first pebble will be *alleluia!* Think—how kind God has been to me! What God has done for me! *Memory* will be my first pebble. *Alleluia!*

My second pebble should be *a promise*. I should take one of God's promises. That should be my second pebble.

My third pebble should be *a prayer*—a little prayer in my heart, just as I am going to fight.

And my fourth pebble should be *a text*—some text to think of.

And my fifth pebble should be *a kind word*—a good word—perhaps that good word should be 'Jesus'! That is a very good word.

Can you think of any five better pebbles than these? I have been trying to think (have you?) what are the best pebbles to give you. Perhaps you will think of some better ones. Those are the five I have thought of—*alleluia*—*a promise*—*a prayer*—*a text*—*some good word*.

And what shall be the 'sling'? What will send it

all along? What will do a great deal of good? Who can tell me? Faith—trust in God. I trust in God, and that will send these five things on the right way, and make them effectual. Faith is my sling, and I give you my five pebbles.

But, mind you, they must be 'smooth'. What will make them 'smooth'? What makes things 'smooth' in your conscience? When you have used it a great deal.

What is the next thing that will make things smooth? *A little oil*. And what is the 'oil' to make the pebbles 'smooth'? What is like 'oil'? The Holy Spirit!—God's Good Spirit! Using the conscience well, practising it, and having the Holy Spirit will make all things 'smooth'.

You have got your 'sling', you have your 'five pebbles', you know how to make them 'smooth'—by practice and the holy oil—the Holy Spirit. Then you can conquer Goliath; then you can conquer your giant. John can conquer John; Thomas can conquer Thomas; Mary can conquer Mary; Elizabeth can conquer Elizabeth. If you are ever naughty you can conquer your naughtiness.

There was once a boy with a bad temper; he was very sulky, soon put out. His mother said to him—'Now, Edward, I will read you a verse in the Bible; will you think of it? It is one of the Proverbs. The verse is, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city".' She made Edward say those words very often. Little Edward went out, and he met a boy who called him a very rude name indeed. Just as Edward got his fist up to strike him, he thought of the text—'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city'. He put down his hand, turned round, and walked home. When he got to his mother he threw himself into her arms, and said—'Mother, I did it! I did it!' and then burst out crying. That conquered Goliath. It was a noble victory!

I could tell you of a great man, and his name was St. Chrysostom, and because he was so eloquent, and used such beautiful words, he was called 'the golden mouth'. He lived about three hundred years after Christ. He was brought before the Emperor of Rome because of his religion. I will tell you what the emperor said to him, and what he answered. The emperor said to him—'I will banish you from your country, your fatherland'. St. Chrysostom said to him—'You cannot do so, for all the world is my Father's world. My Father's world is my country, and you cannot banish me!' Then the emperor said to him—'I will take away all your possessions!' St. Chrysostom said to him—'You cannot; I have got possessions where you cannot touch them. My treasure is in heaven; you cannot take away my treasure there.' Then the emperor said—'I will take away all your friends. You shall live alone in some island by yourself. You shall have no friends!' St. Chrysostom replied—'You cannot do so. God is my friend; you cannot separate me from Him.'

Then the emperor said—'I will take away your life'! St. Chrysostom replied—'You cannot; my life is "hid with Christ in God".'

You see this holy man was thus enabled to meet this great emperor and not be afraid, because God was with him: *he trusted in God.*

Have you ever conquered a giant? Have you been fighting with a giant to-day? Will you really fight? I hope if any boy asked you to fight that you would not do so, except it be to fight for a little boy; I never would fight for my own sake, but I might, perhaps, for another's sake. Have you ever got a victory?—JAMES VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children*, (5th Series) p. 13.

### THE WAY TO CONQUER

'David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.'—I SAMUEL XVII. 37.

It is something wonderful to mark the interest that all boys take in fighting. You are never weary of hearing about battles and adventures with savages, and combats between men. Paul tells us that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, but that is all he says—he does not tell us whether the beasts he meant were men or creatures. I fancy if he had told us more about that fight it would have been the chapter a good many boys would have liked best.

And it is well to learn to fight; but I do not need to tell some of you that—perhaps you are just a little too much given to practising. You want to find out how to be a good boxer, how to make the best 'guard' and the best 'thrust,' don't you? Well, I can tell you. There was a great boxer in this country not very long ago: perhaps you have heard his name—it was Tom Sayers. He was a champion; and one day a young man went up to him and said, 'I say, Sayers, what is the best guard?' and he threw himself into a boxing attitude. 'Well,' said the old champion very quietly, 'the best guard you can ever make is this—keep a civil tongue in your head!' Practise that guard, practise that guard; you can always say you were taught it by the bravest boxer in the world, and he was sure to know better than anybody what was the best guard. Keep a civil tongue in your head and it will be difficult for people to hurt you much.

And the best 'thrust'—you want to know that? So did a very good young lad once. 'Do you think,' he said to his minister one day, 'that there is any harm in learning the noble art of self-defence?' 'Oh, no,' said the minister, 'I think it is a very good thing to learn; I learnt it myself when I was young, and I have found it of great value.' 'Oh, indeed,' said the lad quite joyfully; 'which system did you learn—the old English system or Sullivan's system?' 'Neither,' said the minister; 'I learnt Solomon's system.' 'Solomon's system?' asked the other wonderingly. 'Yes,'

said the pastor; 'you will find it laid down in the first verse of the fifteenth chapter of Proverbs—"a soft answer turneth away wrath".'

That's a thrust; you will never learn a better. It must be straight, since it can turn away wrath, for that is more than the strongest blow can do—for a blow of wrath only makes wrath fiercer, just as a gust of wind only makes the fire burn hotter. Practise that guard—a civil tongue; and practise that thrust—a soft answer, and you will win more victories and carry yourself more bravely than ever you could do by using your fists.

So you see I have not a word to say against fighting—in fact, it is a good thing to learn to be a good fighter; only, everything depends on *what* we fight and *how* we do it.

David began by fighting a lion, and after that he fought a bear, and then he was ready to fight a giant. And it was all fair fighting; they did not all rush on him together; it was 'one down and the other come on,' and he was more than a match for them all. Let us learn something about this, for there is something in it worth our learning.

*There are lions and bears that have got to be fought.* David knew that; he knew he was not sent to watch the sheep just to prevent them from straying away. There were wild beasts about, and if they came down on his flock there was but one thing he must do—fight! And so he fought. When the lion came he killed the lion and saved the lamb.

And that is a great thing for us to learn, a very great thing indeed: to be ready, aye ready—to trust in God and prayerfully keep our eyes about us. For we shall be attacked by the lion and the bear too. Not like those that came against David, perhaps, or those that you have seen in the Zoological Gardens, but lions and bears all the same, and cruel ones too.

There is the *lion*, for instance—how strong he is, how nimble, how he creeps along like a cat with his soft velvet paws, how he lurks amongst the grass, and never utters a sound till with a roar of thunder he springs like lightning and drives in his claws like daggers, and fastens his great teeth in his prey. Ah! nobody will get away from him without many a fearful wound.

Now there are a great many sins of the lion kind, very, very strong, and yet so cunning—coming to us so stealthily, and springing on us so suddenly and so cruelly. There's *anger*, for instance: how suddenly that springs—what terrible work it makes! And there is *falsehood* and *dishonesty*: how they come creeping up to our hearts with little bad thoughts, little bad thoughts like the soft step upon soft step of the lion, till we come to some temptation, and then the lion bounds out—the falsehood is spoken, the thing is stolen, and the soul is a liar or a thief! Oh! these are fearful words—terrible wounds that are made by the lion! how much need we have to be always on the watch against him. Yes, it is as a lion the devil goeth about seeking whom he can devour; like a lion he never shows himself boldly—he always creeps closer

and closer to us till we think it is all right, and then he springs on us, and we sin. Oh, hearken for the lion's footsteps; they are evil thoughts, evil whispers, evil desires—listen for these in your heart—and when you hear them, oh! pray to Jesus quickly, and watch, for the lion is near, and if you don't destroy him he will destroy you.

But there again is the *bear*. He is not like the lion, not quick—he is rather a sluggish, slowgoing creature. He does not spring on his victim, he comes lumbering nearer and nearer, breaking branches and making many a noise as he comes along; but when he does come to his prey—ah! he hugs it with an embrace that presses the life out of it, unless it can first kill the bear itself. The bear does not surprise people as the lion does; only people who are asleep or very careless need be surprised by the bear.

And there are sins of the bear kind as well as sins of the lion kind. There's *laziness*. What a hug that takes of some people! More people are pressed to death by laziness than by heavy burdens. Oh! watch against indolence, against sloth, against idleness—if you do not kill that sin it will kill everything good that is in you. Never go to bed without praying because you are tired. That is the footstep of the bear—it will soon itself be on you. Never leave your task unlearned because you do not feel in the mind for it. The bear is not very far off when you do that. Watch then, watch—and fight the enemy.

And then again; there are *filthy habits* of the soul, filthy thoughts, filthy ways, filthy words. Pah! what ugly things they are! how they creep into the heart! how they always overmaster the idle! with what a terrible hug they hold the soul until they have killed it! Oh! do not let the filthy bear get a grip of your soul; when you hear it coming—when you hear any one saying filthy words, or doing filthy things, pray to the Lord to deliver you out of the paw of the bear.

Watch for the bear; expect him to come after the lion. I have known some people who killed the lion, who were afterwards killed by the bear. They had fought against this sin and that, and had overcome it, but then they fell into sloth and pride, and many other evils that came more slowly, but that gripped more firmly even than the lion did.

How did David destroy the lion and the bear? It was by the help of the Lord. 'The Lord,' he says, 'delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.' Yes, we never can overcome our sins unless the Lord helps us. Did David see the Lord when the Lord delivered him from the lion and the bear? No; but he knew the Lord was there, and it was by the Lord he had been delivered. It is the same with us. We do not see the Lord; but He is near us when we pray, and it is His strength that delivers us. Trust in Jesus, and not in your own strength, if you would overcome all sin.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 114.

## THE BUNDLE OF LIFE

'The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God.'—I SAMUEL XXV. 29.

THESE are the words of Abigail, the wife of the purse-proud and churlish Nabal. She was not only a beautiful and clever, but also a God-fearing woman. She knew that David was the Lord's anointed, and that his life was precious in the Lord's sight, 'bound in the bundle of life' with Him.

When a Jew was about to go from home, he would pack up in a bag or bundle any valuables which he wanted to take with him, so that he might carry them safely about his person. And Abigail speaks of the souls whom God loves as thus bound up and carefully guarded in the immediate presence of God.

We may regard these words, 'the bundle of life,' as having two meanings; the one referring to the life that now is, and the other to that which is to come.

I. The words refer, first of all, to God's people who are living upon the earth.

This was what Abigail meant. She was sure that God would keep David under His personal care and protection, as one who was specially dear to Him. And the good woman was not mistaken. The word 'David,' as we have said only a few pages back, means in Hebrew 'beloved' or 'favourite,' and the Lord had set His love upon David. How many times He delivered him from those who 'rose to pursue him, and to seek his soul!' The giant Goliath could not hurt him. Neither could the jealous and furious Saul. Neither could his heathen enemies. Neither could his own bad son Absalom. It was one of 'the sure mercies of David' that the Lord should spare him to old age.

In the Old Testament Scriptures long life in this world is promised to those that fear God, and that keep His law. The promise is made, for example, in the Fifth Commandment to those who honour and obey their parents. Length of happy days is a token of God's favour, and oftentimes He 'satisfies with long life' those who 'set their love upon Him'.

No such promise is made to God's enemies, but the very reverse. 'The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.' Instead of the souls of evil men being bound in the bundle of life with the Lord God, 'them shall He sling out, as from the hollow of a sling.' It was so with the brutal and sottish Nabal; his soul was soon slung out in an attack of apoplexy (ver. 38). It was so with King Saul, the persecutor of David; his soul was soon slung out in the battle on Mount Gilboa (xxxix.). The triumph of the wicked is short. Blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

An ancient Greek and Roman proverb says that 'whom the gods love die young'. Amongst ourselves, too, people sometimes say regarding a pious gracious child, that 'he is too good for this world'. But this is to speak as the heathen do. The word of God says



the very opposite. It says, 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom : length of days is in her right hand'.

II. But there is another 'bundle of life' besides that which is bound here on earth. There is the life of glory—life in heaven—'eternal life'. The Old Testament gives a large place to the blessing of a long life in this world; while the New Testament speaks rather of the blessed hope of everlasting life.

There are only two words in the Hebrew Bible corresponding to the five English words—'in the bundle of life'; and the Jews in our time often write these two Hebrew words upon their gravestones. In using them thus they apply them to the future life—the life which Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all departed saints are living now in the bosom of God.

All who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour are 'bound in the bundle of life with the

Lord their God'. When they depart this life they are not 'slung out,' but go to be with Christ which is far better.

Not spilt like water on the ground,  
Not wrapped in dreamless sleep profound,  
Not wandering in unknown despair,  
Beyond Thy voice, Thine arm, Thy care;  
Not left to lie like fallen tree;  
Not dead, but living unto Thee.

Even now 'your life is hid with Christ in God'. Jehovah-Jesus regards His people as His jewels, and He carries 'the bundle of the living' about with Him on His person. What a high honour this, and what unspeakable blessedness! The enemies of the saints must kill Jesus before they can injure them. His bosom stands between His people and destruction.

CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 203.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

## JONATHAN, THE MODEL FRIEND

'Jonathan—thy love to me was wonderful.'—2 SAMUEL  
1. 26.

THESE words David used in the lamentation which he wrote when he heard of the death of his friend Jonathan. We seldom hear anything said about Jonathan. And this is surprising when we remember what a remarkable man he was. He was a remarkable soldier. His courage was very great. We have a striking illustration of this in the fourteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel. At that time the Philistines had gained great victories over the Israelites. They had put garrisons of soldiers all through the land of Israel. They had taken away from the Israelites their swords and spears, and would not let any blacksmiths remain among them for fear they would make swords for them to fight with. When things were in this sad state, Jonathan made up his mind one day that he would try his hand with their enemies, and see if he could not get a victory over them. He told his armour-bearer what he was going to do, and asked him to go with him, and help him. He agreed to do so, and they two went out by themselves, and made an attack on one of the garrisons of the Philistines. Their enemies were afraid of them and ran away. Jonathan and his companion went after them, and killed a number of the Philistines. Then the Israelites heard of it, and great numbers of them came and joined Jonathan and his companion. They attacked the other Philistine garrisons. The Lord sent an earthquake at that time. This frightened the Philistines. They all ran away; and the end of it was, they were defeated and driven back into their own country, and a glorious victory was gained by the Israelites. And all this was owing to the courage of Jonathan, when he made his bold attack on the Philistines that day with his armour-bearer to help him.

And then, in addition to being a brave soldier he was an uncommonly good son. We might speak of him as the model son, and there is a great deal in his history that could be brought out to illustrate this view of his character. But the most interesting thing in the life of Jonathan is the friendship that existed between him and David. And so, I wish to speak of Jonathan as—*The Model Friend*. And there are three points about this model that will deserve our attention.

**In the First Place, Jonathan was the Model of 'A Loving' Friend.**—A friend is good for nothing unless he really loves us. And the better he loves us, the more his friendship is worth.

Let us look at some illustrations of what loving friends will be and do.

*A loving friend.*—Colonel Byrd of Virginia fell into the hands of the Cherokee Indians when our Government was at war with them. He was condemned to death, and was led out to execution. One of the chiefs in that tribe had been the Colonel's friend. As the executioners approached to put the Colonel to death, this chief came out, and standing before him, said: 'This man is my friend. Before you can get at him, you must kill me.' This saved his life.

*A little hero.*—A boy in a town in Germany was playing one day with his sister, when the cry was heard, 'A mad dog! a mad dog!' The boy saw the dog coming directly towards him; but instead of running away, he took off his coat, and wrapping it round his arm, boldly faced the dog, holding out his arm covered with the coat. The dog flew at his arm, worrying over it, and trying to bite through it, till men came up and killed him.

'Why didn't you run away from the dog, my little man?' asked one of the men.

'I could easily have done that,' said the brave boy, 'but if I had, the dog would have bitten my sister.'

He was truly a loving friend and brother.

*The little substitute.*—I have one other story to illustrate this part of our subject. A teacher in a day school had to punish one of his scholars for breaking the rule of the school. The punishment was that the offending boy should stand for a quarter of an hour in a corner of the schoolroom.

As the guilty boy was going to the appointed place, a little fellow, much younger than he, went up to the teacher, and requested that he might be allowed to take the place of the other boy. The teacher consented. The little boy went, and bore the punishment due to the other boy.

When the quarter of an hour was passed, the teacher called the little boy to him, and asked if his companion had begged him to take his place. 'No, sir,' he replied.

'Well, don't you think that he deserved to be punished?'

'Yes, sir; he had broken the rule of the school, and he deserved to be punished.'

'Why, then, did you want to bear the punishment in his place?'

'Sir, it was because he is my friend, and I love him.'

The teacher thought this was a good opportunity for teaching his scholars an important lesson.

'Boys,' said he, 'would it be right for me now to punish that boy who has broken the rule of the school?'

'No, sir,' answered the boys.

'Why not?'

'Because we have allowed his friend Joseph to be punished in his place.'

'Does this remind you of anything?' asked the teacher.

'Yes, sir,' said several voices; 'it reminds us that the Lord Jesus bore the punishment for our sins.'

'What name would you give to Joseph for what he has now done?'

'That of a substitute.'

'What is a substitute?'

'One who takes the place of another.'

'What place has Jesus taken?'

'That of sinners.'

'Joseph has told us that he wished to take his friend's place, and be punished instead of him, because he loved him. Can you tell me why Jesus wished to die in the place of sinners?'

'It was because He loves us.'

'Repeat a passage from the Bible which proves this.'

'"The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"' (Gal. ii. 20).

Jonathan was the model of a loving friend. But Jesus is the most loving of all friends. We may well look up to Him, and say, in the language of the hymn:—

One there is, above all others,

Well deserves the name of Friend;

His is love beyond a brother's,

Lasting, true, and knows no end.

**In the Second Place, Jonathan was the Model of 'A Generous Friend.'**—Jonathan was the oldest son of Saul, the King of Israel. He was what men call 'The heir-apparent' of the throne of Israel. This means that he was the one to be made king when his father should die. Jonathan knew this. He fully expected to be king on the death of his father. And all the people of Israel expected it too. But God had determined to take the kingdom away from Saul and his family, because of his disobedience. The prophet Samuel had been sent by God to anoint David to be King of Israel, instead of Saul. When Saul heard of this he was very angry, and tried in every way to kill David.

But it was very different with Jonathan. When he found out that it was the will of God that his friend David should take his crown and throne, and be king instead of him, he was not at all angry. He made no objection to it. He never thought of quarrelling with David about it. He knew that it was right for God to do just what He pleased; and he submitted at once to the will of God, although it took the crown of Israel away from him. He said to David when they were talking about this matter: 'Thou shalt be king over Israel; and I will be next to thee' (1 Sam. xxiii. 17). Noble Jonathan! Generous Jonathan! It does our hearts good, and helps to make us better, just to *think* of such friendship! Another example of generous friendship like this is

not to be found anywhere in the history of the world. How well we may speak of Jonathan as the model of generous friendship!

*The Confederate soldier.*—In one of the battles in Virginia, a Union officer fell, severely wounded, in front of the Confederate breastworks. He lay there crying piteously for water. A noble-hearted Confederate soldier heard his cry, and resolved to relieve him. He filled his canteen with water, and though the bullets were flying across the field, and he could only go at the risk of his life, yet he went. He gave the suffering officer the drink he so greatly needed. This touched his heart so much that he instantly took out his gold watch and offered it to his generous foe. But the noble fellow refused to take it.

'Then give me your name and residence,' said the officer.

'My name,' said the soldier, 'is James Moore, of Burke County, North Carolina.'

Then they parted. That soldier was subsequently wounded, and lost a limb. In due time the war was over, and that wounded officer went back to his business as a merchant in New York. And not long after that Confederate soldier received a letter from the officer to whom he had given the 'cup of cold water,' telling him that he had settled on him \$10,000, to be paid in four annual instalments of \$2500 each. \$10,000 for a drink of water! That was noble on the part of the Union officer. But to give that drink of water at the risk of his own life was still more noble on the part of that brave soldier. I never think of it without feeling inclined to take off my cap and give a rousing 'Hurrah!' for that noble Confederate soldier.

*The noble engineer.*—Two freight trains on the Philadelphia and Erie railroad came into collision. Christian Dean was the engineer of one of those trains. Both he and his fireman were fastened down beneath the wreck of the locomotive. Dean was held by one of his legs close by the fire of the engine. His fireman was nearly buried under the pieces of the wreck. When they were discovered, Dean had managed to reach his tool-box, and was making every effort to get the fireman out. When he saw the men who had come to help them, Dean said to them, 'Help poor Jim! Never mind me.' The fireman was taken out as soon as possible; but he was unconscious. Then Dean was taken out. And it was found that during all the time he had been working to relieve his friend, the fireman, the fire was burning his own leg to a crisp. It was literally roasted, from his knee down, and had afterwards to be cut off. And yet the noble fellow, unmindful of his own sufferings, was only thinking about his companion, and trying to relieve him. This was a generous friend indeed!

I have only one other story on this point of our subject. We may call it—

*The spirit of Christ.*—Thomas Samson was a miner, and he worked very hard every day for a living. The overseer of the mine said to him one



day: 'Thomas, I've got an easier berth for you, where there is not so much work to do, and where you can get better wages. Will you accept it?' Most men would have jumped at such an offer, and would have taken it in a moment. But what did this noble fellow do? He said to the overseer: 'Captain, there's our poor brother Tregony: he has a sickly body, and is not able to work as hard as I can. I am afraid his work will shorten his life, and then what will his poor family do? Won't you let him have this easier berth? I can go on working as I have done.' The overseer was wonderfully pleased with Samson's generous spirit. He sent for Tregony, and gave the easy berth to him. How noble that was! It was indeed the very spirit of Christ. Now, all the three stories we have here show the same generous spirit that Jonathan had in his friendship with David. He was the model of a generous friend.

There is one other point for us to notice in Jonathan, and that is, that he was **The Model of 'A Faithful' Friend.**

Jonathan and David lived in very trying times. It was a time of war; and they were surrounded by many and great difficulties and dangers. But, in the midst of all those trials, Jonathan's friendship for David never failed and never faltered. He went to meet him whenever he could, in the woods, or in the mountains. He did, and said everything in his power to help and comfort him. And, until the day of his death, he remained unchanged—the faithful friend of David. And we should try to imitate the example of Jonathan in this respect. Let us aim to be faithful friends to those we love.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 164.

### CHRIST IN THE HOUSE

'And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.'—2 SAMUEL VI. 11.

THE Bible tells us of three arks. There is, first, the ark of Noah; then there is the ark in which Moses was preserved, while yet an infant; and lastly, there is the ark of the covenant, of which the text speaks. The name applied to this last is in the Hebrew given to a number of other things. To a coffin, for example. The word ark means a chest. You see, therefore, why it was applied to Noah's floating house. That was a great chest, rather than a ship built as ships now are, made to hold the creatures God was to save from the flood. As the waters rose, it would rise on their surface and move with any currents that might flow, but it would not sail about much. It was a huge box. Moses's river-cradle, too, was a little coffer made to float, if the water rose among the flags where it was laid. It is not improbable that the ark of God given to the Jews had some reference to Noah's. In the hieroglyphic pictures on the walls of Egyptian temples and tombs there are many representations of arks, growing, in all likelihood, out of remembrance of the deluge, and of the deliverance from it which God gave to Noah and his house. God, in fixing the

symbols and types which were to teach the Jews, was pleased to use a similar emblem. But whether or no this looked back to Noah, it looked forward to Jesus. It was a figure of the Saviour, by whom sinners escape from the flood of Divine anger which sweeps away the wicked.

This ark was made of a particular kind of wood, called in our Bible shittim wood, and was plated all over with gold. It had a lid, which got the name of the mercy-seat. On this lid stood two winged figures, one at each end, called cherubim. Between these, when the ark was put in its place in the inner sanctuary, there rested a wonderful light, the token of the glory of God. Hence God is spoken of as dwelling between the cherubim. In the ark or chest of which the mercy-seat was the cover, there were laid up the tables of stone that Moses received on Sinai, with the Ten Commandments written on them by the finger of God. In a place beside the ark was the pot that had manna, and the rod of Aaron, which, you remember, was a dead staff when laid up before the Lord at night, but was covered in the morning with buds and blossoms. Here, too, was laid up a copy of the whole law of Moses as God gave it by him. The ark was formed in the wilderness, and was placed in the inner and smaller of the two rooms, made with boards and covered with curtains, of which the Tabernacle or tent of God consisted. It was carried from place to place with great care, and according to an order and form which God Himself commanded. There were several very wonderful occurrences in its history. When borne by the priests to the brink of Jordan, the waters of the river were divided before it; and as long as it stood in the bed of the stream they did not return to cover the road by which the Israelites passed over. When carried round the city of Jericho, seven days in succession, and on the last day seven times, the walls fell flat before the people of Israel, and they went up without opposition into the city. The ark was afterwards placed in Shiloh, and when there, a strange thing happened to it. It was taken into the midst of the camp of Israel when they were about to fight with the Philistines. The battle was fought, Israel was beaten, and the ark of God was taken captive. After seven months, during which time judgments had fallen on the Philistines wherever the ark was carried, it came back drawn by two cows without a guide, and rested in a harvest-field in Bethshemesh. Then it was left at Kirjath-jearim, till David thought of bringing it into Zion, but awestruck by the death of Uzzah, who rashly put out his hand to touch it, the king made it be carried into the house of Obed-edom, where it rested three months. And all the time it rested there a blessing rested with it. The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

Now, I said the ark was a figure of Jesus. The very name given to its lid is applied to Him. The propitiation, or propitiatory, or mercy-seat. The lesson of the ark, with that glory abiding on it between the cherubim, read in New Testament light,

was this, 'God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses'. What I am to speak of, therefore, in connection with the text, is the blessedness of having Christ in the house. The ark was a blessing to Obed-edom; but there are three respects in which Christ is better than was the ark. Let us first notice these, and then show how Christ in the house secures blessings for a family.

I. The ark was but a sign; and we, instead of the sign, have the Saviour himself. The difference is like the difference between a portrait of your father and your father himself. I need not tell you which is best. The ark, too, sign as it was, was out of sight; it was placed in the dark inner tabernacle, and a veil hung before it which none but the high priest might put aside, on one day of the year only. This showed that the way into God's presence was not yet made open by Christ's death. But now it is, and Christ in the house teaches that every one may have access to the Father by the faith of Him.

II. The ark could only be in one house at a time. Christ can be in the homes of all. When the ark was in Obed-edom's house, David had it not in the place prepared for it. But Jesus can be at the same moment in the queen's palace and the shepherd's cottage on the hill. It has been remarked that this is one thing which makes it better for the Church in this world to have Christ's presence by the Spirit, rather than his mere bodily presence. He could not be, in his human nature, in every place at the same moment, but his Spirit is everywhere.

III. The ark was in Obed-edom's house only for three months. Christ, where he is welcomed, never leaves a house. He dwells with us till at last he exchanges our house for a mansion in His Father's, where we shall dwell with Him for ever.

Having mentioned these things, I go on to tell you why a home is happy where the ark rests. Take three reasons:—

I. Where Christ is there is a throne of grace.

II. Where Christ is there is a furnished table.

III. Where Christ comes in sin goes out.

**I. There is a Throne of Grace where Christ Dwells.**—The mercy-seat and the throne of grace are the same thing; throne is the King's seat, and grace is mercy. Christ, as our mercy-seat is, first, our way to God to be forgiven. The lid of the ark, on the great day of atonement, was sprinkled with blood. The meaning was, that by Jesus' death sinners would be reconciled to God and forgiven. That is a very happy state. To be safe—to be able to look up and call God Father! Let me take you to two families on the same night, in the same city, and show you what a difference forgiveness makes. First, we go into a house, and find all the people wailing, and crying, and wringing their hands. It is midnight, but there is no sleep, and the whole family are in terror. For suddenly the first-born child has died, and word has come from the neighbours round that the same thing has happened in their houses. The whole place

is full of lamentation. The avenging angel has been smiting Egypt for its sins. But now, let us look in on a house in Goshen, where the Israelites stay. We find the household all awake here too. But there is no wailing. The family are gathered round the table, dressed as for a journey; and they are looking in each other's faces, as they eat in haste, with an expression of mingled joy, and awe, and wonder. What makes all the difference? The angel of wrath has not been here; and if you wish to see what stayed his hand, look at the lintels and door-posts. There are blood-marks there, and the angel knew that all within the house where these appeared were bought by God for Himself by the life of sacrifice.

**II. Where Christ is there is a Furnished Table.**—A pot of manna, as we saw, was laid up beside the ark; some think within it, but rather beside it. Manna was bread given straight from the sky, and was a type of bread for the soul, which does not grow, like corn, out of the earth, but must be sent from God. He has sent it, and, wherever Christ is in a house, He dispenses it. In what form we get it I need hardly tell you. Our pot of manna, that never corrupts, or wastes, or palls on a sound taste, is the Bible. The taste of the old manna was like wafers mixed with honey; but this is 'sweeter than honey and the honey comb'. What a difference the Bible in a house makes, especially in a day of sickness and of death! It is like a lamp, then, in a dark night. But I was calling it bread, rather, and I go back to this to say that you should take daily meals of it. You do not like to go without food for the body for even one day. Mind your soul too. You would think it a very miserable house that had no food in it. To an angel's eye, a house that is without Christ's book, or, having the book, does not use it, is far more miserable. A good man once entered a house in Germany, and found it very wretched—no fire, no furniture, no food. Everything bore the appearance of utter poverty. But, glancing round, he saw in a neglected corner a copy of the Bible, and, when he went away, he said to the poor inmates, 'There is a treasure in this house that would make you all very rich'. After he had gone the people began to search the house for what they thought must be a jewel or a pot of gold, and, finding nothing, they went to dig up the very floors, in hopes of discovering the hidden store of wealth. All in vain. One day after that the mother lifted the old Bible, and found written on the fly-leaf of it, taken from its own pages, these words, 'Thy testimonies are better to Me than thousands of gold and silver'. Ah! she said, can this be the treasure the stranger spoke of? So she told her thought to the rest; they began to read the Bible, became changed in character, and a blessing came in to stay with them. The stranger came back to find poverty gone, contentment and peace in its place, and a hearty Christian welcome, while, with grateful joy, the family told him, 'We found the treasure, and it has proved all that you said to us it would'.

**III. Where Christ comes in Sin goes out.**—You

remember what happened to Dagon, the idol of the Philistines, when the ark was brought into his temple. Twice he fell flat on his face, and, when his worshippers lifted him up, he was all broken and maimed. So idols fall down in the heart and in the house where Christ enters in. Christ and sin cannot stay peaceably together. An old Roman emperor was willing to put a statue of Jesus among the other gods of the empire; but the Christians said that would not do. Christ must be on the throne, and all that is against Him must be made His footstool. This was one lesson taught by the budding of Aaron's rod when the staves of all the other tribes remained dead as they were.

But observe carefully that I have not said, that before Christ comes in sin must be put out. It is His coming in that sends it away. Suppose you were in a dark room in the morning, the shutters closed and fastened, and only as much light coming through the chinks as made you aware it was day outside. And suppose you should say to a companion with you, 'Let us open the windows, and let in the light'. What would you think, if he replied, 'No, no, you must first put the darkness out, or the light will not enter'. You would laugh at his absurdity. Just so, we cannot put sin out of our hearts to prepare for Christ's entering; we must open and take Him in, and sin will flee. Fling the window open at once, and let Christ shine in.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 231.

### THE FERRY BOAT

'And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good.'—2 SAMUEL XIX. 18.

If you had seen David that night in his tent, you mightn't have thought very much of him. He was just like other people; nothing different. He had no crown on his head or glittering jewels on his garments; his clothes were poor and shabby, and he looked very worn and spent.

Yes; but he was a king, a king every inch of him. For a great promise had been given to him, and it was God who had given it—the promise that he would yet be seated on the throne in Jerusalem, and would have the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand. Ah! it's a big mistake to judge by appearances. There are people now all round us just like David; they have a hard 'time of it, and they are sometimes very tired, and they look like very common folk, but yet in the midst of it all they smile, and there is a strange, sweet song always singing in their hearts. It is the song of the promise—God's promise—that they who love the dear Lord Jesus shall yet be kings, and shall reign with Him. They are kings and queens now, though you can see no crown on their brows, for God has said it, and they believe His word—and that is enough—they shall come to the throne yet, for all that they seem so poor. Isn't that worth living for? and worth looking for, and striving after? It is—and it can be for you, as

it can be for every one; for it is the promise of God to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live in the love of Him. Make it your own; take the promise for your very own self. Fix your heart, once and for ever, sure and certain on Jesus Christ, and you shall sit on a throne yet, and wear the crown.

But one thing troubled David that night, as the like has troubled many since. He could not be king till he came to Jerusalem, and there was the river between! The Jordan was broad, and deep, and strong; how would he ever get across? I have known many people troubled about that—very troubled indeed—so long as they were high up on the bank, or far away from the dark, rushing river; but when they came at last down to the brink, there was no difficulty whatever. That was what David found. When he went down in the dark to think it all out, and find if there was any place better than another, he heard a voice speak in the darkness and bid him come, and trust; and there was a boat by the water's edge! And a word was whispered in his ear, and he was no longer afraid, but stepped boldly in, and the boat silently glided away through the gloom. Where he was going he could not tell, but he had the promise, and trusted to it, and was not afraid; and it all turned out as the Lord had promised him: there was a shore beyond, and when he landed on it there were throngs on throngs of friends waiting for him, to accompany him up to the city of palaces and bring him to the kingly throne. The promise was fulfilled, David sat on the throne, and wore the crown and the jewelled robes, and was every way a king.

Trust to God's promise, and live for Jesus, and you need never be afraid of the time when you have to step down to the river. The boat will be ready waiting for you when that hour comes. The boat is black, and the oars dip silently, and the ferryman's face is hidden till you have got across and the sun has risen; then, behold! it is Jesus Christ Himself who has brought you over. That is enough; to be with Him is to be safe. The crown and the throne are certain when Jesus Himself leads us to them.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 29.

### THE BEAUTY OF THE KING'S TITLES

The Lord is my rock.'—2 SAMUEL XXII. 2.

Jesus Compared to a Rock.—If you and I go and stand by the cradle in which a baby is sleeping, no matter how much we love it, or feel interested in it, we cannot tell what sort of a person it will be when grown up. No one can tell this of any ordinary baby. But it was different with Jesus, when He lay, as an infant, in the manger at Bethlehem. If we had gone with the shepherds to worship Him, we might have taken our Bibles with us, and as we stood there, gazing in wonder at the infant Saviour, we might have opened our Bibles; and turning to one passage after another, that the prophets had written about Him, we might have told just what sort of a person He was going to be. It had been foretold about Him



that He was to be a Prophet—a Priest—a King—a Shepherd—a Father—a Friend—a Counsellor—a Comforter—a Leader—a Refuge and a Shield. He was compared to a great many things that were useful, and interesting, and beautiful. And among these He was compared to a rock. David was speaking of Jesus, in the chapter in which our text is found, when he said, 'The Lord is my Rock'. And there are a great many other places in which He is spoken of as a rock. The Prophet Isaiah says in one place, 'In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength' (xxvi. 4). In the Hebrew Bible the word for 'everlasting strength' means also 'the Rock of Ages'. We always think of Jesus when we sing that good old hymn,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

And it is right to think so. Here we see the beauty of Jesus our King in the titles applied to Him, Now, we are to think of Jesus as—*The Rock*.

And the question we have to try and answer is—What kind of a rock do we find in Jesus?

There are four things about this rock of which we must speak, if we wish to understand just what kind of a rock it is that we find in Jesus.

**I. It is 'A Broad Rock' that we Find in Jesus.**—Every other rock is confined to some one particular place. If you want to get any benefit from it, you must go to the place where the rock is found.

We have all heard, for example, about the 'Rock of Gibraltar'. This is a great mountain of rock in the southern part of Spain, at the entrance into the Mediterranean Sea. It belongs to England. The English people have made a fort or citadel out of that mountain rock. Rooms and galleries are cut through the heart of it. Port-holes for canon are made through those walls of solid rock. That is the strongest fortress in the world. It is so strong that it cannot be taken. The heaviest canon-halls can make no impression upon it. If you and I were in danger of being attacked, we should be entirely safe, provided we could only get into that rocky fortress of Gibraltar. But suppose that we are in danger here, in our own country, and that strong rock is thousands of miles away, will it be of any use to us? No. It is too far off. We cannot reach it. But when we think of Jesus as our Rock, He is not, like the Rock of Gibraltar, confined to one particular place. He is in every place. He is indeed a *broad Rock*. This Rock is so broad that it may be found in every country. In any part of the world it is easy to get on this Rock. This is what David meant to teach us when he said, 'From the ends of the earth will I cry unto Thee—when my heart is overwhelmed—lead me to the Rock' (Ps. lxi. 2).

If we want to know how broad this Rock is, we must notice what sort of people get on to it.

**Where Am I Going?**—One fine summer evening, as the sun was going down, a man was seen trying to make his way through the lanes and cross-roads that led to his village home. His unsteady, staggering

way of walking showed that he had been drinking, and though he had lived in that village more than thirty years, he was now so drunk that it was impossible for him to find his way home.

Quite unable to tell where he was, at last he uttered a dreadful oath, and said to a person going by, 'I've lost my way; where am I going?'

The man thus addressed was an earnest Christian. He knew the poor drunkard very well, and pitied him greatly. When he heard the inquiry, 'Where am I going?' in a quiet, sad, solemn way he answered, 'To ruin.'

The poor staggering man stared at him wildly for a moment, and then murmured, with a groan, 'That's so'. 'Come with me,' said the other kindly, 'and I'll take you home.'

The next day came; the effect of the liquor had passed away, but those two little words, tenderly and lovingly spoken to him, did not pass away. 'To ruin! To ruin!' he kept whispering to himself. 'It's true, I'm going to ruin. O God, help me, and save me.'

Thus he was stopped in his way to ruin. By earnest prayer to God he sought the grace which made him a true Christian. His feet were established on the Rock. It was a Rock broad enough to reach that poor, miserable drunkard, and it lifted him up from his wretchedness and made a useful, happy man of him.

**II. Jesus is 'A High Rock' as well as a Broad One.**

David's prayer was—'Lead me to the *Rock* that is *higher than I*'. We think of heaven as a *high* place. And so it is. God calls it—'The *high* and holy place' (Is. lvi. 15). And one reason why we may speak of Jesus as *higher* than we are is because He is in heaven, and we are on earth. But there is another sense in which we use this word 'high'. We apply it to *character* as well as to *place*. For example, we sometimes say of a person in whom we have no confidence that he is a mean, *low* fellow. Then we use the word *low* as meaning *bad*—a bad character. And so, on the other hand, when speaking of a person who is good, and honest, and noble-hearted, we say he has a *high* character. And so the word *high* sometimes means that which is noble or good. And Jesus may well be called *high* in this sense; because He is the best and noblest of all beings. And He not only has this character Himself, but He makes those who know and love Him share it with Him. It has been well said that—'A Christian is the *highest* style of man'. And this is true of boys and girls too. And so we may well say that when we become Christians we are led to a 'Rock that is *higher* than we are'. It makes us better than we were before. Those who are really on this Rock may truly be said to be on a *high* Rock, because they are on a Rock that will help them to become good, and kind, and generous and noble. Let us look at some examples of those who are on this high Rock, and see what kind of persons they are.

'My 'Mancipation Book'.—In the year 1834 the British and Foreign Bible Society sent a large number of copies of the New Testament and Psalms to the West India Islands, to be distributed among the negroes there. The distribution of these books took place at the time of the Emancipation of the negroes, or their freedom from slavery. They came to think that, somehow or other, the Bible was the cause of their freedom; and so they were accustomed to call it their 'Mancipation Book'.

Some time after this a Christian lady, who wished to make herself useful, was visiting one afternoon at a negro hut on one of the plantations. After talking for awhile, with the negro woman who lived there, she saw a fine large copy of the Bible on the shelf, and pointing to it, she said:—

'Nanny, what handsome book is that you have there?'

'Oh, missis! dat's my 'Mancipation Book.'

'But it's of no use to you, Nanny, because you can't read it.'

'For true, missis, me no able to read him; but me pickaninnies (children) can.'

'Well, but your pickaninnies have books of their own to read. You might spare that for somebody who can read, but who has no Bible.'

'No, missis,' replied Nanny, with great earnestness, 'no; me no able to spare him at all. Dat book de one watchman for me house.'

'How so?' asked the lady.

'Why, missis, beforetime, Nanny's temper used to rise too strong for her. Me no able to keep him down at all. But now, when de bad temper would rise, de book stan dar, and him say, "No, no, Nanny, you no go for to do dat. Dat is wicked".'

And so Nanny, who had been one of the most ill-tempered and disagreeable persons on the plantation, became, through the grace of God, a thoroughly changed woman. The mere sight of the Bible which she could not read was a help to her in subduing her bad temper. It was a *high* Rock to which she was led when she became a Christian. It was higher than she was, and gave her a better character than she could have had if she had not been led to that Rock.

III. This is 'A Sheltering Rock'.—Sometimes we find in a high rock, or on the side of a mountain, a place cleft out nicely lined with soft moss. There you can sit down and find protection and comfort when the wind is blowing, or the rain is beating, or the storm is bursting. *That* is a sheltering rock. And it is such a rock as this that Jesus is compared to in the Bible. David is speaking of Him when he says: 'In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me up upon a rock' (Ps. xxvii. 5).

IV. The Last Thing to speak of about this Rock is that it is 'A Well-furnished Rock'.—Sometimes we see a great rock that has ferns growing on it. There is plenty of nice soft moss and beautiful flowers there, and streams of clear, cold, sparkling

water are flowing down from it. And in the Bible we read of honey being found in some rocks, and oil also. And sometimes gold and silver, and diamonds and other precious gems, are found on rocks. And if we had a rock on which all these beautiful and valuable things could be found, it would be very proper to speak of that as a 'well-furnished rock'. But I suppose there is no one rock in all the world on which all these things could be found. But we have just such a Rock in our Blessed Saviour. He is indeed 'a well-furnished Rock'. Everything that we need for the happiness and salvation of our souls, both in this world and in the world to come, we find in Him. David is speaking of those who are on this Rock when he says, 'Those who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good' (Ps. xxxiv. 10). And the Apostle is speaking of those who are on this Rock, too, when he says—'My God shall supply *all your need* from the riches of His grace in Christ Jesus' (Phil. iv. 19).

'I've been on this Rock for forty years,' said an aged Christian, 'and it grows brighter all the time'. What a blessed thing to be on such a Rock.—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 187.

## SELF-DENIAL

(A Lenten Sermon)

'David longed, and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!'—2 SAMUEL XXIII. 15.

THE fortunes of the minstrel-king (as David is often called) had become desperate indeed. The last attempt had been made for reconciliation with jealous and vindictive Saul. David had bidden farewell, with many tears, to his much loved and faithful Jonathan, and had sent his aged parents for safety beyond the Jordan to take refuge with their ancestral kinsman of Moab. Saul, with bloodthirsty hate, was pursuing him like a partridge on the mountains on one side, while the Philistines were pressing him closely and perseveringly on the other.

As a last resort David had taken up his abode in one of the wild caverns of the mountains, which he had known as a shepherd boy; and here he was joined by a detachment of men from Judah and Benjamin, and by several mountaineers of Gad who swam the swollen waters of the Jordan, to cast in their fortunes with the outlawed hero.

It was while in command of these two bands that a company of Philistines had swept down on the vale of Rephaim, in harvest-time, and the beasts of burden were being laden with the ripe corn. The officer who had charge of these fierce idolaters was keeping a close watch in the neighbouring village of Bethlehem.

Meanwhile the burning rays of the Eastern sun shone down on the bare rocks amidst which David and his companions were nestled, and as he remembered the home of his boyhood, with its terraced slopes, luxuriant with wheat, and covered with vines and olives, his fainting soul sank within him, and he cried out, in a passionate burst of home-sickness

which he could not suppress, 'O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' It was the same precious water which was afterwards conveyed by great conduits of hewn stone to Jerusalem,

Three of his devoted captains, Abishai, Beniah, and Eleazar, heard this childish wish, and although the much-dreaded Philistines occupied the field between their mountain fastness and the fountain from which David longed to drink, they set forth instantly, fought their way, hand to hand, through the ranks of the enemy, and brought back the water.

The noble spirit of the poet-king rose at the sight, and counting that for which three devoted men had thus risked their lives as too sacred for him to drink, he devoutly poured it on the ground as an offering to the Lord.

A missionary in India says in his journal: 'I one day saw some of the natives assembled for worship with their catechist, when my eye fell upon a woman whose clothes were rather dirty, and I asked about her. "Sir," she answered, "I am a poor woman, and this is my only dress." "Well," I inquired, "have you always been so poor?" "No, I once had both money and jewels, but a year ago, when the thieves took them from me, they offered to give all back if I would deny Christ. I would rather be a *poor Christian* than a *rich heathen!*"'

I have related these two beautiful stories to illustrate my subject, *self-denial*—a subject most appropriate for this season of Lent.

I am truly glad to know that so many children are now giving up things which they are fond of, that they may show a proper regard to the solemn time which, for long ages, has been set apart for fasting and special devotion.

Nobody can be truly great or good who does not learn to practise self-denial.

It is simply absurd to say that children *cannot*, and *ought* not to be made to keep Lent. Do you remember the words of the Lord, recorded in the book of Joel, which are always read as the Epistle on Ash-Wednesday: 'Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people; sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children.'

And for what? That these children may be taught to join in the prayers, and to practise the self-denials by which the wrath of the Almighty may be turned aside. We do not mean that the young can do these things to the same extent as their elders, but they can do something. They can keep away from the cake and candy shops, and be content with plain food at home, and think much less than common of their favourite amusements, thus observing Lent, and learning the wholesome lesson of self-denial. There is something about selfishness which excites in us real disgust. Indeed, it is only another name, and a milder one, for *piggishness*.

We are accustomed to call children who are very greedy, and who cram themselves on all occasions

almost to bursting, *little pigs*. Such *little pigs* are pretty sure to grow up to be *big* ones. If Lent, therefore, did us no other good than to teach us to deny ourselves, and to practise self-control, it has accomplished an important work.

The child who gives up a cake during Lent, and thus saves a penny for the poor, has practised self-denial, and He who did not overlook the widow's mite, will never be unmindful of the smallest offering made out of love to the Lord Jesus. When we have learned, after many vain and discouraging efforts, to deny ourselves in little things, we have taken the only sure plan for accomplishing the same in regard to great ones. Good Bishop Wilson, in his 'Sacra Privata' (a small book of private prayers, which has helped to fit hundreds and thousands for heaven), mentioned a variety of things in which the spirit of self-denial may be brought into exercise. 'Every day,' he says, 'deny yourself some satisfaction—your eyes, objects of mere curiosity; your tongue, everything that may feed vanity, enmity; the palate, dainties; the ears, flattery, and whatever corrupts the heart; the body, ease and luxury, bearing cold, hunger, restless nights, ill health, unwelcome news, contempt, and ingratitude with patience and resignation to the will of God.'

I know how much easier it is to say what *ought* to be done, than actually to bend our stubborn wills to do it; but this does not render it the less necessary to lay down rules in books and sermons, which may help men, women and children in their efforts to please God.

A good old lady who saw her niece worrying herself too much about packing away her superfluous clothes, gave her an excellent receipt from a very old book. Perhaps the advice may be useful to others: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' 'In other words,' says the old lady, peering archly over the rims of her round spectacles, 'look over the wardrobe, and bring out coats, shawls, cloaks, and everything that can be spared, and send them to the poor. This will do more to keep out the moths than all the cedar boxes and snuff and camphor in the world!'

If you remember even half what I have said to you, there will be quite enough left to show you the duty and the pleasure of learning to practise *self-denial*. You cannot learn to do it in your own strength, but the Holy Spirit of God will be ready to help you when you ask for His aid.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 142.

## THE LION

'He went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow'—2 SAMUEL XXIII, 20.

THIS text treats of the way in which lions were hunted in Bible lands before the introduction of firearms.



A deep pit was dug in the woods, and carefully covered over with withered leaves, and when the monarch of the forest came out in search of his prey and stumbled into the trap, he was easily secured by the wily hunters, or forthwith dispatched with their long-pointed spears. Benaiah, however, did a more valiant deed than this. He went down single-handed to the bottom of the pit and slew the lion in the depth of winter. Evidently he was one of those muscular giants whom all young Britons delight to honour—a very Samson in sheer herculean valour, a brave and dauntless warrior, who was well worthy of a place among King David's mighty men.

David himself, as a young shepherd, had gone after a lion and a bear, and rescued a lamb out of their teeth. And Samson, when going down to the vineyards of Timnath, had also slain a young lion which came out and roared against him. But both of these encounters had taken place in the open, where there was a fair field and no favour; whereas Benaiah met his antagonist in the most dangerous circumstances—in the middle of winter, when the lion was ravenous with hunger, and at the bottom of a lion-trap, where there was no possibility of escape. Clearly this man was a hero who would neither flinch nor fear: 'He slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow'.

**Brave and Fearless**—that is the lesson which is written large for all healthy and noble-minded boys, and it is taught by the character of the lion, no less than by the courage of the lion-slayer. There are few books in the Bible that do not contain some reference to this majestic animal, and it is always introduced as an emblem of strength and force, whether used for a good purpose or abused for a bad one. Jesus Himself is spoken of as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and our adversary the devil is described by Peter as a roaring lion walking about and seeking whom he may devour.

#### I. The Main Characteristics of the Lion.

1. It is the incarnation of *strength*. Size for size, it is one of the strongest of beasts. It can kill a man or an antelope with one blow of its terrible paw; and so powerful are the muscles of the neck, that it has been known to carry away in its mouth an ordinary ox. Well may its name signify in the Arabic language 'the strong one'.

2. It is also celebrated for *courage*. A lioness is simply the most terrible animal in existence when

called upon to defend her cubs. We all know how a hen, when concerned about her chicks, will beat off both the fox and the hawk by the reckless fury of her attack. And it may be imagined what the fury of a lioness will be when she has to fight for her young ones. She cares little for the number of her foes or the nature of their weapons.

3. Another marked feature is that 'in the dark there is no animal so *invisible* as the lion. Almost every hunter has told a similar story of the lion's approach at night, of the terror displayed by the dogs and cattle as he drew near, and of the utter inability to see him, though he was so close that they could hear his breathing.'

4. The main characteristic, however, is the lion's *roar*. This is said to be truly awful. Gordon Cumming speaks of it as being 'extremely grand and peculiarly striking. He startles the forest with loud, deep-toned, solemn roars, repeated five or six times in quick succession, each increasing in loudness to the third or fourth, when his voice dies away in five or six low, muffled sounds, very much resembling distant thunder'. It is to this Amos refers when he speaks of his own prophetic call: 'The lion hath roared: who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken: who can but prophesy?'

#### II. Two Lessons from the Lion.

1. *It is glorious to have a lion's strength, but it is inglorious to use it like a lion.* When this is not attended to, heroism degenerates into big-boned animalism, and courage into selfishness and ferocity. What might have been the glory of our expanding manhood and a tower of defence to the weak and defenceless becomes the Titanian arrogance of the bully and the senseless boast of the braggart. This is to imitate the lion in a bad sense, and 'I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman'. This is to walk in the footsteps of those Assyrian monarchs who took the lion as their favourite emblem, and counted it their greatest glory to lash the nations in their fury. But all this is selling oneself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, and becoming willing captives to him who walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

2. *It is glorious to have a lion's strength, if the strength be the measure of our gentleness.* It is in this sense that Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He conquers by stooping. His other name is the *Lamb*.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 156.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

## SOLOMON AT GIBEON

I KINGS III. 5-15.

THERE was a farmer who had a very beautiful farm. Somebody said to him :—

'Farmer, what makes your farm so nice? How is it you have such a very good farm?' The farmer said, 'I don't know. I only know one thing—I take very great care of the lambs.' I wish I might be able to say that I take very great care of the lambs!

We are going to think about Solomon and Gibeon.

Let me tell you a little about Solomon. What do you think the word means? 'Solomon' means 'peace,' and 'Jedidiah' means the 'loved of the Lord'. The two together signifying 'God's darling'.

Those are his two names. When he was a boy his tutor was Nathan. He taught Solomon many things. I cannot quite tell you how old he was at the time when we are going to think about him. I know he was ten years old when Absalom died. The Jews tell us he was very handsome, and if we are right to think, as many do, that the forty-fifth Psalm is about Solomon, and the Song of Solomon also, then we have a literal description of him. The forty-fifth Psalm and the Song of Solomon were all about Jesus Christ, but they were, perhaps, about Solomon also. He was, like his father David, 'very ruddy'. He had got black hair, black as a raven's beak; and he was very merry, very happy, and good, 'he was anointed with the oil of gladness'. He was very wise as a boy, and very good.

We are going to speak a little about his being a wise boy, but I cannot quite tell you how old he was at the time we are going to think of him. But he was just made king. He went to Gibeon, a place near Jerusalem. And one night, when asleep at Gibeon, God spoke to him. Do you remember the one hundred and twenty-seventh Psalm? There is a verse there I will read to you: 'It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow; for so He giveth His beloved sleep'. In the German Bible it reads, 'So He gives to His beloved while they are sleeping'. And the Psalm is called, 'The Psalm of Solomon'. And many think that verse was written because God did give Solomon something while he was sleeping. So he gives to 'His darling' His Jedidiah.

We are going to think about that—*God giving something to Solomon while he was asleep.*

While Solomon was at Gibeon, God spoke to him in the night, and God said to him, 'Ask what I

shall give thee'. Solomon had to make the choice. I wonder what you would have chosen if God had said that to you. Now we will think about what Solomon says. He had to make a choice. He had all the world to choose from. God said, 'Anything you like, ask, and I will give it to you'. It is a very difficult thing to make a good choice. There are three very good choices in the Bible, and two very bad, and two where the persons did not choose at all.

Think of the three good choices.

Moses made a very good choice when he did 'not choose to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter'—*i.e.*, to be called 'heir to the kingdom,' which he could have been; but 'chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God'. That was a good choice, and God blessed him.

Joshua made a very good choice when he told the people, 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve'. *I have made my choice*: 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord'.

And David made a very good choice when he said, when trouble was coming, 'Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hand of man'.

These were *three good choices*.

Poor Eve made a bad choice when she chose the tree that was 'good for food, and pleasant to the eyes,' instead of 'the tree of life'.

Lot made a bad choice when he chose pretty Sodom and Gomorrah, though the people were very wicked, because there was plenty of fruit and good grapes.

These are the two *bad choices*.

But what do I mean by saying there were two that would not choose at all? What did St. Paul say? He did not know whether to live or die. He said, 'What I shall choose I wot not; for I am in a strait betwixt two'. So he would not choose at all, but left God to choose for him.

And Jesus Christ Himself would not choose. You read in the twelfth of St. John: 'Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.' I leave it to God. Whatever will be for God's glory. 'Father, glorify Thy name.'

So there were three good choices, two bad ones, and two who would not choose at all. That is what I advise you to do—*leave it to God*.

Now I want to think a little about what Solomon said when God gave him his choice what he would have; do you remember what he said? 'Give me an understanding heart.' How came Solomon to make so good a choice? I think because he was so humble. It is the humble people who always do

best. He said, 'I am but a little child,' though he was a great king; 'I know not how to go out or come in'. So humble was he!

Are you humble? What is it to be humble? Somebody says that to be humble is 'Little I' and 'Great You'. Do you like that term? We generally like the humblest things best. You know the lark sings most beautifully as he mounts upwards to the skies, singing as he soars! Where does the lark live? He is the lowest builder of all the birds. What does the nightingale do? The sweetest bird in the wood lives always in the shade, and likes to sing best in the dark—loves not to be seen—is very humble.

Why does that branch with all the apples upon it stoop down so much? Because it has the most fruit, therefore it stoops. Why does the ear of wheat that is most full of wheat stoop down the most? Because there is plenty in it. Why does a well-laden ship lie the deepest in the water? Because it has got most in it. Who are those that have got most in them? Those who bring forth the most fruit. Who are those that soar the highest, and sing the sweetest? Those who are the humblest. Solomon says very humbly, 'I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in'.

Let me tell you three things St. Paul said about himself. He wrote his Epistles to the Corinthians and the Ephesians before he wrote his Epistles to Timothy. And why do I say this? To show how he grew in humility. In the Epistle to the Corinthians he says, 'I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle'. To the Ephesians he says, 'I am not worthy to be called a saint; I am less than the least of all saints'. And in his Epistle to Timothy he says, 'I am the worst of men; I am the greatest sinner; I am the chief of sinners'. So he first says 'I am not worthy to be called an Apostle'; then, 'I am not a good man'; and next, 'I am the greatest sinner in the world'. So he grew in humility, though he was, perhaps, the greatest man that ever lived.

I think that was the reason why Solomon made so good a choice—because he was so humble, and said, 'I am but a little child!'

Can you go out of a room properly? Can you come into a room properly? It is not everybody that knows how to do that. I dare say if it were an empty room you could go into it or out of it very nicely indeed. But supposing it were full of gentlemen and ladies, could you then go into the room very nicely, and walk out quite nicely, if all the people were looking at you? Supposing you had to walk across a great stage, and thousands of people were looking at you, could you do it as well as you can walk across your room at home, when no one was looking at you? Why cannot you? Because you think of yourself, and what people think of you. 'How do I look?' is your thought. Therefore, being shy, thinking about yourself, you cannot do it well. That is why you cannot sometimes go into a room or

come out of it well—because you are thinking of yourself. Be very humble. Do not care what people say. Then you will do it very nicely indeed. Therefore Solomon made a good choice because he was humble.

What did he choose? He did not choose to be rich. He might have said, 'O Lord, make me very rich!' The Hebrew word for 'riches' means 'heavy'. In the prophet Habakkuk we read, those who are 'rich' are covered with thick clay. 'Woe to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!' And sometimes now pennies and halfpennies, shillings and sixpences, and gold sovereigns are very heavy. They are 'thick clay'. They weigh people down very heavily, down and down. In this way they cannot do just what they ought to do, because of this 'thick clay' of money. I do not wonder that the Jews have the same word for 'riches' and 'heaviness'.

You remember reading of a man on board ship once when the ship caught fire; he could swim very well, and he was going to jump over and swim ashore; then he remembered he had left a great many sovereigns down in the cabin. He went down and filled his pockets with lots of money; then, coming up on deck, he jumped over into the sea with all his sovereigns in his pocket! They were so heavy he could not swim with them, so down he went to the bottom of the sea!

I know many people in life who would have swam very well if it had not been for their money. *Their money brought them down to the ground!*

And Solomon did not choose, either, to be a very great man.

Let me tell you about four great men.

*Alexander the Great* was a very great man. What was the end of Alexander the Great? He conquered many countries, and cried like a baby because he could not find another country to conquer! He would set fire to a city after conquering it; he often used to get drunk, and in one of his drunken freaks he killed his own friend! His death was the result of drunkenness. That was the end of Alexander the Great. '*Thick clay!*' What good did all his greatness do to him?

I will tell you of another great man—*Hannibal*, who repeatedly conquered Italy; but in the end he took poison in an out-of-the-way place, that no one knew anything about.

*Cæsar* took eight hundred cities and killed millions of men. But what was the end of Cæsar? In the place where he held his court those who had once been his friends stabbed him, killed him! That was his end.

*Bonaparte* conquered almost all Europe. But there, in that lone isle of St. Helena, he spent his last days, and died almost solitary, almost unknown. Such was the end of almost the greatest man that ever lived.

Solomon did not choose any greatness; he chose '*an understanding heart*'; he chose cleverness, learning, understanding, and with it he chose a heart, amiable, loving, kind.



I have known (did you ever know?) people very clever indeed—for instance, a boy or girl at school, very clever but uncommonly proud, because so clever, hard, unkind, selfish. And did you ever know a boy or girl affectionate, but very soft, with almost a soft head, an idiot, could not get on at all, but very kind and affectionate, nevertheless? Do not be either of those characters. Have an ‘understanding heart!’ Have both.

But where do you think ‘understanding,’ wisdom, good sense, cleverness dwell? Where are they most? In the head or heart? Can you tell me? Perhaps you thought to do your lesson well because it was all in the head. But I am sure you are wrong. Think more of your heart, and you will do better. If you will be a good boy or girl, love God and do your duty. You will get on well if your hearts are right. Do not *only* think of your head (think of your head), *but think most of your heart.* If you want to get on well with your lessons, remember understanding has to do as much with the heart as with the head. ‘An understanding heart.’ Reason is the head. Where is faith? In the heart.

One day Reason and Faith took a walk together. And Faith said to Reason when starting, ‘Reason, you cannot travel with me’. Reason said, ‘Yes, I can’. So they set off travelling together. Presently they came to a river, and Reason said, ‘I cannot ford that river’. Faith said, ‘I can. So now, Reason, you get on my back’. And Faith carried Reason over the river. By and by they came to a great high mountain. Reason said, ‘I can never get over that mountain, this is too high for me’. Faith said, ‘I can carry you on my back’. So Faith carried Reason over the mountain. Do you understand what I mean? Which did best? Faith.

There are three things—truth, wisdom, love. Then let wisdom and love be on your right hand and on your left. Keep truth before you, and you will go right through life. This is very much what Solomon chose. Follow truth, wisdom, and love, and you will always go right.

A little boy said to his father once, ‘Father, what is the difference between a cherubim and a seraphim?’ His father said, ‘A cherub means knowledge; a seraph means a flame. And therefore it is generally thought that the cherubim have a great deal of knowledge; and the seraphim, having this “flame,” have a good deal of love.’ The little boy said, ‘I would rather be a seraph than a cherub; have greater love than knowledge’. I think we shall be greater than the angels in heaven, and be both cherubim and seraphim there, having a great deal of knowledge and of love also. Try to have both *now*—‘an understanding heart’; be great in knowledge and in love. If you have a great deal of knowledge without love you will not do well; and if you have got a great deal of love without knowledge it is not well; but follow Solomon’s example and you will have a happy life.

God answered Solomon’s request, and said he should

have also what he had not asked for, *viz.* ‘riches, long life, and *honour*’.

In the old temples of Rome you could only get to the Temple of Honour through the gate of the Temple of Virtue. So Solomon acted, and God was pleased with him, and gave him more than he asked. God gives us sometimes more than we ask.

There was a little girl who had a doll which she was very fond of. Her aunt kept fowls, and one day her aunt said to her, ‘I will bring you some feathers of my fowls to make a hat for your doll’. The little girl was much pleased. In a few days her aunt came, and brought her some very pretty feathers to make a hat with for her doll. She also brought some beautiful pieces of silk to make a frock for the doll. She was to sew them together and make up a pretty little frock. The little girl said, ‘Whatever made auntie think of the silk? I do not know. She is like Jesus, *she gives more than she promises.*’ I think the little girl was right. Jesus *does* give more than He promises.

Take a cup, and present it to God. Say, ‘O Lord, fill my cup’. He will fill it so that it will run over. It will be a ‘mantling cup’. In the twenty-third Psalm David says, ‘My cup runneth over’—not full only, but mantling, running over. Try, if you ask rightly, if God will not give you more than you ask.

Now, I want to ask you one thing. The time is come for you to make your choice. I want you to do it *now*. We talk about Solomon’s choice—how wisely he chose. What will you ask?

A little girl said her prayer was, ‘O Lord, keep me from robbers, keep me from fire, keep me from naughty boys. Amen.’ She told God exactly what she meant. She was a very little girl, and she asked God just what she wanted. What will you ask God?

I want you to decide whether you will go to heaven or hell. Will you choose worldly things or heavenly? Will you choose Jesus, to be Jesus’ own child? Will you make that wise choice? I don’t know that I want you to do it before you leave the church; but I wish you to do it to-day—before you go to bed to-night. Make a wise choice. Tell God what you wish.

There was an old king once who had taken a captive, and he said to his captive, ‘You must choose whom you will serve. Will you be a friend to Rome?’ And the man hesitated. Then the king, with the rod he had in his hand, made a circle round the captive, and said to him, ‘You must make your choice *before you cross that circle.* I will not allow you to go out of that circle before you make your choice.’

—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### TRIMMING THE LIGHT

‘The snuffers.’—I KINGS VII. 50.

You smile at such a text, and no wonder! But snuffers were very useful in the Temple; they kept the lights trim and bright. Therefore, they are spoken about again and again in the Bible. We

don't see snuffers very often now in the city, where we burn gas. But every boy and girl has seen them in the country, at all events, where candles are used. They look like a pair of scissors carrying a box on one leg and the lid on the other. The lid 'snaps' the wick and shuts it into the box and extinguishes it—just as charitable people keep unpleasant things to themselves, and so quietly put an end to their offensive odour.

Now you see what snuffers are for; *they are for making a dull light shine brighter*. When the candle has been burning for some time it seems to get dull and drowsy, then 'snap' go the snuffers, and the light gets bright! There are snuffers which do that for boys and girls, and men and women, too, for that matter. There was that sum you worked out on your slate. It was all wrong. What did the master do? Rub it all out. That was the 'snap' of the snuffers. It made you brighter; you took more care over your sums next time. It was the same when you were 'taken down' in the class over that half-learned lesson. That humbling was the 'snap' of the snuffers; it made you master your lessons better next time. You see these men lopping the trees? Why do they do that? To make them bear more fruit. The trees are the better for the sharp snuffers—and so are you. Never be discouraged. When anything happens you don't like, think of the snuffers, and let your light shine out all the better. When mother chides you, don't think she wants to find fault. It isn't that; but she sees your light needs the snuffers, and so she is using them kindly, gently, to make you a brighter, better boy or girl.

Sometimes *you* are the snuffers. That's funny, but it's true! There's your little brother, for instance, he isn't half so wise as you, and sometimes he makes mistakes. Put him right; but take care how you use the snuffers. *If you use them carelessly you may put out the light altogether*. What I mean is this, you may so discourage him that he won't have any heart to try to do better. Therefore, use the snuffers gently. Don't call him 'stupid' or ridicule him. Trim the light kindly and neatly; don't be rough and put it out.

Remember, God wants your light to shine that others may get blessing by it; so you must expect Him now and again to trim it. Look at that candle; it has been burning these hours. What a long, burnt wick it has got hanging over. It doesn't give any light, and, pah! what an offensive smoke comes from it. But it is quite content. It says, 'Why should I part with any of my wick? it's mine, and I mean to stick to it, whether I give light to others or not'. That's the *selfish* candle, and the selfish boy or girl is just like it. Come, quick with the snuffers!—we must teach that candle that it wasn't made to please itself, but to give light to others. *And that is what God does with every one He loves*. By one way or other He tries to trim their light that it may shine the brighter. Think of this when any trouble

comes: God wants to make use of it to make you braver, better, purer, more faithful and more loving; so, whenever you fail, don't be discouraged; just take it like the 'snap' of the snuffers, and resolve to do better next time.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Churchette*, p. 7.

#### LAMPS

'Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem.'—1 KINGS xv. 4.

I HAVE spoken to you before to-day about 'a candle set on a candlestick'. I am anxious not to repeat what I then said. Lamps were used in the East for many purposes; they were used by those who had to journey by night along dangerous paths, and the Psalmist prayed that the Lord's truth might be 'a lamp unto his feet' as the lamp was a light to the weary pilgrim in the darkness of night. Lamps were also used in the house, used, as I have told you, in the room in which the family were congregated, and were placed high upon a lampstand so that every one in the room might have a share of the light. They were also used in God's Temple. The golden candlestick was there. The lights were kept burning so that the Temple was never dark.

It is important to remember, moreover, that not only was this true of the Temple, but the homes of the Jews were never dark. Of course, by day there was no need of the lamp, but by night, even among the poorest of the poor, a little light was kept burning until the dawn. And when people come from the East to our country they are greatly impressed with the difference. In many instances, when we retire for the night, there is not a light to be found anywhere in the house. Now, an Oriental does not like that custom, and will not readily adopt it. He thinks that a house without light, even in the darkest hour of the night, is a house no longer inhabited. Hence, in Palestine you cannot pass a house in the depth of night which has no light in it.

Now this fact makes it easier for us to understand the verses I am about to read to you. 'The light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him' (Job xvii, 5, 6). You know what that means: someone lives in a certain house, or it may be a tent, but if he dies and there is no one else to take his place, the candle that was kept burning there every night is kept burning no longer. That is, when he dies the light goes out in his house. There is no one to succeed him: no one to take his place and bear his name honourably when he himself is gone. There is another verse in the same book: 'How oft is the candle (or if you look at the margin, "the lamp") of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them!' (Job xxi, 17). Again in the Book of Proverbs (xiii, 9) we read, 'The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out'. Now let us return to the Book of Kings, this very book where my text is: 'And unto

his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a light (or, according to the Hebrew, "a lamp") always before me in Jerusalem (1 Kings xi. 36). Again in my text we read: 'Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem'. While the lamp was kept burning, an Oriental concluded that people dwelt there, but when the lamp was put out, he concluded that there was no one dwelling there. Now I think that is very significant. The Lord gave a lamp to David 'to set up his son after him,' so that the lamp shall be kept burning by him and by his children after him. This was a guarantee that David and his descendants would have a home in Jerusalem for many, many years.

Now, the Lord has given us a lamp which ought to shine in our homes, and a lamp that ought never to go out in the darkness of the night. Now, what is that lamp He has given us? It is His Word which He has given us to lighten our darkness. What a blessing it is when not only in our sanctuaries and in our Sunday schools, but in our homes, this lamp is burning. I trust we never darken the lamp by anything we do, and that we do all we can to keep it burning brightly. This is the only lamp that can lighten our darkness in times of sorrow. You do not know much about sorrow yet, but you will find, as you get on in life, that there will be trials, that a darkness will come upon you in which you will need all the light that God's lamp can give. Oh, to possess it now, and keep it always burning in the home, and wherever we go!

The Bedouin tribes, whenever they settle down for the night on their journeyings, have their camp fires. They carry thorny undergrowths with them, and, at night, pile them round their camp and set fire to them, so that they may be guarded against wild beasts as well as against being surprised by the enemy. Thus they sleep in the light of their fires. The Prophet Isaiah refers to this custom when speaking of some people who were too fond of sleeping in the light of their own fires rather than in God's light: 'Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

They were men who lit camp lights of their own, like the Bedouin companies in the desert lighting their little camp fires and rejoicing in them, rather than like the Israelites having God's pillar of fire—for 'in the daytime also He led with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire'. And when speaking to Jerusalem He said, 'I will be a wall of fire around you and a glory in your midst'. There are many men who think they can go through the world in the light of their own kindling, but God comes to us, and comes to you, early in life and says: 'I will be your Guide: you will have to pass through darkness sometimes, but My light shall shine, your lamp shall never go out'.—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks to Men, Women, and Children*, p. 408.

## A CHILDREN'S CHAPTER

1 KINGS XVII.

SOME chapters in the Bible belong to the children. The seventeenth of First Kings is one of them. It is the story of the ravens that fed the Prophet Elijah, and of the barrel of meal that wasted not in the home of the widow at Zarephath.

I still remember how often I turned to this chapter when I was a child. I liked to read about the ravens and the barrel of meal. I thought at the time that I understood the chapter; but I know now that it was only little bits of it I understood, and even these in a way that was poor.

There are two things in the chapter in respect of which my thoughts were those of a very little child. I did not understand all that was meant by the words, 'There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to My word'. I did not know, as I came to do when I was older, that they meant death to man and beast. I did not think of the sheep and the cattle, nor of the mothers and babies, that must die for want of water and of the food which water helps to grow. I did not think of the fields that could grow no corn, and of the people that could have no bread. I did not see that it was all the same to say 'no dew nor rain,' as if the prophet had said 'no harvest, no flowers, no fruit, no grass for the cattle, no corn, no bread for man, and no work for work-people: nothing but hot suns baking hard and dry the earth, and smiting old and young with famine and death'. In my childishness I only thought of wicked Ahab and Jezebel. I said to myself: 'They deserved to have a bad time, and to be without rain or dew, for being so cruel to the prophet'.

The other thing in which my thoughts were wrong was the brook Cherith. It was very stupid on my part, no doubt, but if I had been a painter at that time, and had been set to make a picture of Elijah at the brook, I should have painted a beautiful little river running through the land, just like an English river, and the prophet sitting on the bank. But how could there be a beautiful river running through the land when there was neither dew nor rain? Rivers are the children of the dew and the rain. No rain, no brook. The brook Cherith then could not have been like an English brook. It was a deep gully among the hills, a kind of pit far down in the earth, which the winter torrents had dug when rain was plentiful; a deep pit, hidden out of view of man by brushwood, and cool to sit in, where the sun's rays could not pierce, and full of water which the last rain had left. This was the place to which God sent the prophet. He would be safe hidden there. He would have store of water there. It would be a shelter for him till the evil time went past.

Although I was wrong in some bits of my thought as a child, I was not wrong in all. Now that I am a man I think just as when I was a child, that there was a real and right connection between the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel, and God's withholding of



dew and rain. Wickedness like theirs never goes unpunished. Then and now the ways of evil-doers must be hard. Although God does not always take the way of keeping back the rain, in other ways—by war, by pestilence, by losses in money, by failures in trade, or by taking away life that is dear—He shows His displeasure against sin.

But this is not a chapter to show the judgment of God, but one to tell of His mercies. We learn from some words spoken by our Lord at Nazareth, that all that happened at the brook Cherith happened because He was thinking of the poor widow at Zarephath. This chapter, therefore, is like a window opening into the very heart of God.

It helps us to see the wonders of His love to poor people. Perhaps there was not in all the world at that time a poorer woman than the widow at Zarephath. Alone with her little boy, with only a handful of meal in the barrel, with no knowledge of where the next handful was to come from, she must have been amongst the poorest of the poor. And she was a heathen: without knowledge of the great things which God had done for the Jews. Yet to this poor widow, to this woman ignorant of God's great deeds, God was about to send the man who was the greatest in Israel—perhaps in the whole world. He was about to send Elijah. It is God's way. When the lost world was to be redeemed, He sent, not some great King, nor some angel, but the greatest in heaven or earth, His own Son, the brightness of His glory. And that Son took the form of a servant, that He might do His Father's will in this work of saving the world.

And that is not the whole of this wonder. Not only does God send great ones to poor people, as He sent His own Son to lost people, but He makes it a law that the great ones who are to do His work must first have lessons to prepare them for their work. That was the law even for Jesus. He came into the world to teach men and women to be obedient children to God. But in order to do this He had Himself first to learn obedience. He knew power, He knew command, He knew everything that God's Son in heaven might know; but obedience as a man He had to learn. And He learned it by the things He suffered. His father set Him to endure hardship, and hunger, and opposition, and mockery, and unjust judgment, and at last death. And He said at every step, 'Not My will, but Thine, O Father'. And so it was with Elijah, who was one of His forerunners.

Although the widow at Zarephath was the poor body I have described, the great Elijah had first to learn the lesson she was to be taught, and not till then go and deliver it. The lesson she was to be taught was that God cared for her, and that behind the care for her was love. And Elijah was set by the brook Cherith to learn that very lesson. And morning and evening, as the ravens brought him bread and flesh to eat, he took that lesson into his heart. Those black-winged bringers of the food seemed to say to him every day: 'O Elijah, we are God's servants doing His will; and we will bring this bread and flesh to

thee to show thee that thou art cared for by God—that the wicked Ahab and Jezebel shall not prevail against thee'. And I am sure, if we could have been beside Elijah on those mornings and evenings, we should have seen the tears running down his cheeks, when his heart burned within him at the thought of the tender and continuous care of God.

In reading a chapter like this, boys and girls, and some old people as well, are apt to think that it is not only of an old world they are reading, but of a world that has quite vanished from the earth, and was quite different from that in which we are living now. People say, 'There are no miracles now; no ravens bring bread and flesh; and there are no barrels of meal that waste not'. But that is all a mistake. There are miracles now as many as then, and as wonderful, although they are not wrought for us in the very same way. The miracles of the old times, told of in the Bible, were wrought to help us to open our eyes on the miracles which are being wrought every day in all our homes. The barrel of meal that wasted not—is there a child among all the children who shall hear or read these words who has not seen that miracle? Is not this very barrel to be found in the home of every child who has had daily bread to eat? Day by day the child comes down to the breakfast-room, and from the beginning till now want has never been known—or has never been known for long. And although God does not send our bread and flesh by ravens, is it less wonderful, is it less a miracle, if He sends it from countries thousands of miles away in ships; or from places in our own country by trains which are drawn by fire? Wherever there is a home in which bread and flesh have not failed, and where water has been sure, where the children have been fed and nourished from infancy up, there, in that home, in one form or other, the very miracles this chapter tells of have been wrought by God.

But now, coming back to brook Cherith and the prophet,—the time drew near when he was to leave that shelter, and the school where he had been set to learn his lesson, and go to Zarephath, and teach it to the poor widow and her son. The brook dried up. And God said to His servant, 'Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon; I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee'.

I have often thought of the meeting between those two at the outside of the poor home—the prophet with his hairy mantle, with his tangled hair, with his flashing eyes, faint and wearied with his journey, but with a heart that had hope in God; and the poor famine-stricken widow, with blanched face, with eyes sunk in her head, with lips black by reason of want, and with a heart in which hope was all but dead.

The very first thing the prophet did was to put her faith to the test. Was this the widow to whom God had sent him? If it was, there would be something in her heart to which he might appeal.

The test he applied was a very hard one. Between death and this poor widow and her child there was

just a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil—in our cool country it would be called butter—in a dish. No more! This one meal, and then famine—then death. And Elijah said to her, 'Make for me first'. What a trial of faith was that! Give up the one handful of meal to a stranger! Do not think this was selfishness. Elijah was speaking for God, and to try if she had trust in God. Some way or other she was aware that he was speaking for God. Some way or other she had been prepared for this hour. And God gave her grace for the hour when it came. She prepared the food for the prophet first. She said to her son, 'Forbear—it is God who bids me do it'. And from that hour prosperity came into her house: the barrel of meal wasted not, the cruse of oil failed not. All the time the famine hung over Israel and the world, there was plenty in that house. Poor though she was, she opened her heart to the glad news, to the new lesson, that God was caring for her. She showed her faith by receiving the servant of God and giving up her last morsel to him. And God blessed her trustful faith.

And now another wonder in God's ways with His children comes to view in this chapter. When God gives one lesson, it is that those who receive it may go on to learn a second. God's children are always at school. Heaven is the highest school of all. And so this poor widow found. She learned that God is the Lord of the meal and the oil; and that corn-fields and cattle, and milk and honey are only from His love. But it is not enough to learn that we live by God's bread; we must learn other things of God by which we live as well. And by and by the widow was set to learn her second lesson. It was the lesson that life itself is from God. He laid His hand upon her boy's life. The boy died. There was meal in the barrel, but her boy was dead. Perhaps she had never before thought that her boy was as much a gift from God as the meal. Or, that the life in her boy was a gift as much as the bread by which it was nourished. She learned that now. The Lord took her boy; and the light went out of her home and out of her heart.

She sent up a great cry of anguish. She cried to the prophet, 'O man of God, has this come to me for my sins?' The only thought she could think was that God was angry. She did not yet see that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. But she was to learn this second and higher lesson. God made her wise above the wisdom of heathen people in that age. He taught her to trust Him for her daily bread; He taught her that lesson by first bringing her store of bread low and then filling it with plenty. And in the same way He taught her to trust Him for her life and her son's life. He took life away from her boy. But to show her His power and His love, He gave it back to him again.

One other very helpful lesson comes in through this recovery of the widow's son. But I will only mention it. It is a lesson for those who have been called to weep as this mother was for their dead. What hap-

pened to her was a light shining in a dark place, to foreshow the life and immortality which only Jesus could bring to light. Mothers in Old Testament times had not the same comfort which mothers now may have. They did not know that the dead should rise again. But foregleams of that comfort were given now and again by God. And this giving back of the widow's son was one of these. What happened to that mother will happen to all bereaved mothers who put their trust in God. To them also, but in a more glorious fashion and in a better world, a world where death can never return, God will give back the dear children they have lost.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 149.

### ELIJAH, THE MODEL REFORMER

'Elijah the Tishbite.'—1 KINGS XVII. 1.

WHEN we look at Elijah as the model reformer, we can see four points about this model which we must try to imitate, if we hope to be as successful in our work as he was in carrying on the work he had to do.

**Elijah was, in the First Place, a Model of 'Promptness'.**—Whatever God told him to do, he went to work at once and did it. When he was told to go and tell Ahab the king that there would be no rain for three years, although he knew that it would make him very angry, he went right away and did it. And three years after this, when he was sent to deliver God's message to Ahab, although he knew that the king had been searching for him everywhere that he might kill him, yet he went, without a moment's delay, and did just what God had told him to do. He was prompt. And the lesson of promptness is a very important lesson for us to learn and practise, both in the service of God and in all our daily duties. Let us look at some illustrations of promptness and of the good that results from it.

Our first story may be called—

*Promptness leads to success.*—A few years ago the owner of a large drug-store advertised for a boy. The next day the store was thronged with boys applying for the place. Among them was a queer-looking little fellow, accompanied by his aunt. 'Can't take him,' said the gentleman; 'he's too small.'

'I know he's small,' said his aunt, 'but he's prompt and faithful.' After some consultation the boy was set to work. Not long after a call was made on the boys for some one to stay in the store all night. The other boys seemed reluctant to offer their services. But this boy promptly said, 'I'll stay, sir.'

In the middle of the night the merchant went into the store to see that all was right, and found the boy busy at work cutting labels. 'What are you doing, my boy?' said he. 'I didn't tell you to work all night.'

'I know you didn't, sir. But I thought I might as well be doing something.'

The next day the cashier was told to 'double that boy's wages, for he is prompt and industrious.'

Not many weeks after this a show of wild beasts

was passing through the streets, and naturally enough all the hands in the store rushed out to see them. A thief saw his opportunity, and entered by the back door to steal something. But this prompt boy had stayed behind. He seized the thief, and after a short struggle captured him. Not only was a robbery prevented, but valuable articles stolen from other stores were recovered.

'Why did you stay behind,' asked the merchant of this boy, 'when all the others went out to see the show?' 'Because, sir, you told me never to leave the store when the others were absent; so I thought I'd stay.' Orders were given once more: 'Double that boy's wages, for he is not only prompt and industrious, but faithful'. That boy is now getting a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars a year, and before long he will become a member of the firm. He was following Elijah's model of promptness, and it helped to make his fortune.

Elijah was a model of promptness. Let us try to imitate his example in this respect, and we shall find it very useful.

**II. Elijah was a Model of 'Patience' as well as of Promptness.**—When God wanted Elijah to work, he was, as we have seen, *prompt* to do whatever he was bidden to do. And when he was told to wait for the further manifestation of God's will he waited patiently. When the long three years' drought came on the land, God told him to go and hide himself 'by the brook Cherith,' near Jordan. He went and remained there in patience till he was ordered to leave.

I have often seen pictures of Elijah at the brook Cherith. These pictures represent the prophet as sitting under the shadow of a tree, with a pleasant brook flowing by, and a beautiful landscape all around. And I used to think that it was in some such lovely place that Elijah spent his long days of patient waiting. But the men who drew those pictures had never seen the brook Cherith, and knew not what it was like.

When I was in the Holy Land I learned better. In going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and the Jordan we passed by the brook Cherith. On reaching the spot I guided my horse gently along to the edge of a fearful precipice and looked down. There was a dark valley or chasm hundreds of feet deep. The side of the valley near where I stood went down almost perpendicularly. From the other side of the valley a steep, rocky mountain rose up like a wall of stone. At the bottom of this valley I could see a little brook winding its way through. That was the brook Cherith. How gloomy and dark it looked! And all around was lonely, and wild, and desolate! It gave me a chill to look at it then; and it gives me a chill now to think about it. And that lonely and dreary-looking valley was the place where God told Elijah to go and hide himself from Ahab. There he went, and there he stayed for eighteen months or two years. And during all those long and lonely days and months he saw no one, and

had no one to speak to. The ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook. God told him to go there, and he went. God told him to stay there, and he stayed. He never worried nor murmured; but waited patiently till God's time should come for him to change his place. How well Elijah had learned the lesson of patience! And in the work of reformation which we have to do in our own hearts and lives, one of the most important things for us is to learn well this lesson of patience.

**III. Elijah was a Model of 'Confidence';** and we should try to follow his example in this respect.

When Martin Luther the great reformer was on his way to the city of Worms, where the Emperor Charles V. had summoned a great council to try him, some of his friends tried to persuade him not to go there. They were afraid if he ventured to go he would be thrown into prison, and put to death. But Luther's confidence in God was so great that he never had a moment's fear. He said to those who were trying to keep him back: 'If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of its houses, I would still go there'. What noble confidence that was!

*A child's life saved by trust in God.*—A maid-servant in India who was a heathen was received into a Christian family to have the charge of the children. She attended prayers in this family, and so learned to know something about the God whom Christians worshipped. She used to take the children out, and was well acquainted with all the places in that neighbourhood. She was gentle and kind to the children, and the family liked her very much.

One day when she was out with the children they went farther in their walk than usual, and being tired they all sat down on the grass to rest. One of the little ones strayed away, and not returning at once the nurse said she would go and look after her, and told the other children to stay where they were till she returned.

She ran off, calling the child by name as she went. Presently she heard the child's voice answering her call. Very soon they met, but judge of her surprise when she saw a great fierce-looking tiger coming up towards the child. She ran at once and bravely took her stand between the child and the tiger. In a moment the thought came into her mind, I must trust my master's God. Then she threw herself on her knees, and in an agony of feeling offered up this short prayer: 'Oh! my master's God, save my master's child, for Jesus' sake! Amen'.

She rose from her knees, and looking towards the tiger saw that it had turned round and was walking away into the thicket. Here we see what a blessing confidence in God is.

**IV. Elijah was a Model of 'Courage'.**—There came a time in Elijah's life when he had to engage in a very trying work—a work in which great courage was needed. He told the king to call all the people of Israel together, and all the prophets of Baal—four



hundred and fifty in number—that they might settle the question whether the Lord was God, or Baal. There was the whole nation of Israel, and all the prophets of Baal on one side, in this matter, and Elijah alone on the other—and yet without a moment's fear he went bravely on to do what God had told him to do.

He engaged alone in that struggle—one man against four hundred and fifty; and yet he was not afraid. Truly he was a model of courage! And we must have just the same kind of courage if we hope to be successful in the work of reformation we have to carry on in our own hearts and lives.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 178.

### WHAT WAS ELIJAH LIKE WHEN HE WAS YOUNG?

‘Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead.’—  
1 KINGS XVII. 1.

I KNOW children like to hear stories about brave men. Some of these are not true stories, and not meant to be true ones. They are often merely made-up tales about people who never really existed. But in ‘the Great Elijah’ we have a true character and a real hero in the best sense of the word. I cannot help thinking, also, that rugged and stern as his character was, he is a choice favourite with the young. I do not know any subjects to which young eyes have greater pleasure in turning than Bible pictures of the Prophet fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, or going up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

A noble and striking figure his must have been, with his lithe limbs and sinewy arms; his dark eyes and bushy shaggy locks (for he is in one place called by the strange name, ‘the Lord of hair’), and, what he seems always to have carried with him wherever he went, the rough sheep-skin cloak thrown over his shoulders.

A very natural question for you, my young friends, to ask is, Can you tell us what sort of an infancy and boyhood and youth was his? What like was he in his early years?

The Bible informs us nothing positively about this. It tells us nothing about his birth-place; nor about his father or his mother. He seems to have been born somewhere on the other side of the Jordan, among the rocks and glens of Gilead—what may be called the Highlands of Palestine.

But although we cannot, as in the case of one very like him—I mean John the Baptist—gather in thought around his cradle; we may, at all events, fancy him when a child seated on his mother's knee,—listening from her lips to some of the Songs of Zion and hearing about the Great God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob—his father's God and his own.

More than that it has been well said, ‘The child is the father of the man’: and I think from his after history and character I could almost tell what sort of a boyhood his must have been.

I do not know if there were schools in Gilead. If there were I can imagine him as the leader in all

manly sport, the acknowledged little king among his village playmates. No one able to match him in strength of arm and fleetness of foot: fearless in encountering great dangers. He could breast the swellings of Jordan or climb its rocks and precipices. And when his companions would be scared and run frightened away, he would bravely face some of the wild animals that prowled in the Jordan Valley or roamed the forests of Bashan near his home.

And yet, with that curious mingling of opposites which is often seen in the same character, I believe that in some things and at some times, he would be the very reverse of bold, in these his younger days. I can fancy, when anything crossed him, that he would go fretting all the day long. Perhaps he would rush away to some hiding-place, like a truant boy—as he did at a future time, a truant man—weep childish tears, and become miserable and faint-hearted on account of mere trifles which would be ashamed afterwards to think had so much vexed and annoyed him.

I dare say you remember that occasion to which I refer, when he was in the cave at Mount Horeb whither he had fled in great fear from Queen Jezebel? (1 Kings xix. 3, 4). God met him and said to him, ‘Elijah! what doest thou here? What is all this sulkiness and ill-humour and moping about? Get you hence from your rocky cavern and be yourself again, and return to your duties!’

Likely his earthly father (whose name, however, as I have already said, is not given) would sometimes have to speak to him in the same way, and rebuke him for being hasty, petted, and passionate; easily cast down and quick at taking offence.

Now this is not a nice, I would rather say it is a bad character. It is a miserable thing to have a fretful, sulky, whining nature.

Still, while I say so, I shall tell you what is a noble thing. It is noble to rise above such a nature. This I believe was the case with Elijah; for we only read of his peevishness once getting the better of him in after life. It was in that unworthy flight to the Sinai desert of which I have just spoken. But he would seem as if in his earlier years he had said to himself—I am strong in limb, and strong in mind, and strong in will. I feel as if I could do a great deal that is either bad or good. I shall strive, with the Divine help, against all the bad passions of my heart, and seek only after what is true and virtuous and right.’ He prayed to God to make him good; and God heard his prayer. Listen to what St. James says about him: ‘Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he *prayed earnestly*’ (James v. 17).

This is a lesson for you. Do as Elijah did. If any of you have peevish tempers, don't say, ‘I have this nasty failing naturally; I cannot help it. There is no use of me striving against it!’

Yes, there is. If Elijah had thus given up the struggle, the world would never have known of him, except, perhaps, as some wild, fierce, revengeful man

—unhappy himself, and making everybody unhappy around him. But go and pray—pray ‘earnestly,’ and God will give you grace to rise above your evil hearts and unamiable and unloving ways.

Elijah, I need not remind you, never saw the Lord Jesus Christ. He only saw ‘His day afar off and was glad’. Yet it is interesting to know, from Gospel story, that that Divine Saviour is no stranger at all events to him now. The beautiful glimpse we get of the great Prophet on the Mount of Transfiguration, informs us what the subject is which he, in common with the whole company of the glorified, delight most to think about and to talk about: It is ‘the decease which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem’ (Luke ix. 31). Full of great deeds and good works as the Tishbite’s life was, he tells us that it is to none of these he trusts for salvation. He owes all to Jesus; and as a debtor to grace and redeeming love he casts his crown at Jesus’ feet.

Elijah, you know, died without tasting of death. When you come to a similar hour you will not be able to leave the world, as he did, without meeting the last enemy. But you will be bold and brave in that hour too, if like him you do your duty and your work, whatever it is, faithfully as in the sight of God; seeking to follow what is right, and hating, with all your heart, what is wrong. Aye, and even should you be called to die when you are yet young; if you have thus served God and tried to please Him—your parents, as they stand round your death-bed and close your eyes, would dry their tears and say: ‘Bright angels have come down in chariots of fire, and have taken our loved one to heaven’.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 149.

### BETTER OR WORSE?

I KINGS XIX. 4.

ELIAS thought and said he was not better than his fathers. No one else who thoroughly knew him thought so. As a prophet, as a bold advocate of religion, as a fearless and uncompromising enemy of idolatry and national corruption, he was a great improvement upon his predecessors—the young men of a former age. The fact that he himself did not see it only serves to further demonstrate the truth that it was so. The goodness which knows its own dimensions, and publishes them, is not goodness but goodness, a quality of which the world has always been too full. But the goodness which is modest and retiring is always too scarce. Wherever you find this goodness it is a proof that the kingdom of heaven is not far off; that the example of the Divine Man of Nazareth has been copied more or less sincerely; and that the person or persons who are characterised by it are on the crest of the onward wave in the evolution towards the highest type of the human.

To the question—Are our young people growing better or worse? we answer *they are better*, much better than their predecessors. And one of our chief reasons for believing so is the very modest estimate they form of themselves.

A similar question to the one we are now discussing has been asked in regard to the world at large, ‘Is the world growing better or worse?’ A pessimistic minister the other day answered this latter question in the affirmative, by asserting that the world was going to the devil as fast as its feet could carry it. We do not believe anything of the kind. To assert such a thing is to libel both the goodness and the power of God. The world going to the devil as fast as it can! No! With all its sin, it is coming from the devil faster than it ever did before. The pessimistic old croakers who regale this nonsense to their auditors ought to be muzzled until they learn to talk sense. If they have no better gospel than this to preach let them keep silent. The world *is* growing better. God is no liar. Truth cannot be defeated. Light must find its way out. The same is true of the young members of the race which make up the world in the sense we speak of it. We believe this fact—

**1. Because the Number of those who are Guilty of downright clearly defined Wrong-doing is immeasurably less than it ever has been.**—Less, of course, in proportion to the increase of the population. The criminal statistics not only of England but of every other civilised country show this. Students of sociology have in some cases tried to prove the reverse. But even taking their own method of proving, that of figures and cold statistics, they have not only failed to prove that humanity is growing worse, but have been compelled to admit that it is decidedly growing better. Since the beginning of the present century a kind of anti-brutality crusade has formed itself, acting silently but effectively, with the result that even those who are still brutes, in spite of all, are ‘refined brutes’. In the early part of this century the young men who were sent to our higher schools—our Etons, Harrows, and Rugbys—and into our universities, were so low in their morals, so brutal in their deeds, and so disgraceful in their habits, though they came from the richest homes in the land, that even Lord Byron, who was one of the best of their number, spoke of them as ‘the blackguards who always form the majority of our university students’. John Wesley referred to them as ‘The youth, or, in other words, the pagans of our age’; while Cowper lamented that since eight out of every eleven of those under twenty-five were as irreligious as Herod, the future was nothing but a possible hell on earth! Even the pessimists we mentioned just now never go half as far as that in describing even the worst section of the youth of to-day! They would if they could. Let us thank God they cannot. Facts are against them. The brutality of sin as in the last generation is fast disappearing. Education is melting it away as the sun melts away the ice lumps on the brow of the hill, or the snow heap in the corner of the glen.

**II. We Believe our young People are Better because their Ideals are Higher.**—A high ideal is the spring of social progress and public enterprise. The

heart that beats with no aspiration to something higher is in a hopeless state. The mind with no grand ideal before it can never rise, and is practically dead. Emerson even went so far as to say that the whole history of the human soul is written in its ideals. It is, therefore, a sign pregnant with great hope that the ideals of the youth of to-day are not only higher but also much purer than those of their predecessors. When you remember that the ideals of the young are the ideals which form the character of the age, you will agree that too much importance cannot be attached to this truth. Of course we cannot give more than one or two illustrations of this apparent fact. You will agree that the young people's ideal of a professing Christian is higher than what it used to be.

**III. Because the best Things of this Age are accomplished by the Young.**—There was a time when it was almost a crime to be young. To be young then meant to be rash, inexperienced, raw, and incapable. Now it is almost a crime to be old! To be old now, alas! in too many places, means to be without resource, without power, without pluck and go. Of course we know in reality it is not so. But the young people of this generation have so impressed their power and ability upon the age that to be young is almost synonymous with being successful. This is certainly a gain for the young. And the more one examines the steps over which the century has climbed to its pre-eminent position, the clearer he sees that the great majority of them have been shaped and built by young people. The two most prominent sovereigns of the world are young men. The ablest statesmen of the day are young men. The ablest prose writer of the age is a very young man. The ablest poet is quite juvenile. The same is true of the ablest novelist, they are all young people in the very flush of young life. It is needless to multiply examples. Look at the outstanding features of the age, and you will find young people forming a majority among the factors which account for them in every sphere and direction, and the things that matter most about this great fact is that these brilliant feats of the young are not only characterised by dash and pluck, and daring genius, but that the great majority of them show big strides in the real goodness of the motives which underlie them.

**IV. Their Attitude towards Religion is more Reverent.**—The Voltaires and the David Humes of the age of our fathers are gone. The few great sceptics of our day are so reverent that they prefer being present when family prayers are conducted to being absent. The cynical scoffing sceptics are all dead. No young man or young woman of the present age, having any claim to genius or even great learning, bids for notoriety by airing his scepticism or infidelity. We do not mean to say there are no infidels and sceptics among the young, but there are fewer than there used to be; and even those who are such are so reverent in their attitude that you scarcely

count them on the other side at all. And this is so not only among the learned and talented young people, but among the ordinary ones which we meet and deal with in daily life. There is far more reverence in the house of God, in the attitude shown towards sacred things, in the language adopted to describe the spiritual life and its claims, than there used to be among young people. And this is the most useful sign of all. When the earnest young souls of to-day tell us, as Elias told himself of old, that they are not better than their fathers, we say, 'Thank God that is a sign in the right direction'.—H. ELWYN THOMAS, *Pulpit Talks to Young People*, p. 17.

### A GREAT MISTAKE

'The Lord is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys.'  
—I KINGS XX. 28.

This is not true: it is a great, great mistake, and the man who said it first was the first to find that out. He was a king, and he had gone with a great army to fight against a little handful of God's people; but they beat him—beat him altogether, and he had to flee for his life. And he put it all down to the fact that the battle had been fought on the hills! Next time he determined to be wiser, and so he came back again with a great army, and this time he kept away from the hills, and kept down in the valleys, and thought he was keeping out of the way of God! But he wasn't; he was defeated again and made to flee, and made to understand that God is a God of the hills, but he is God of the valleys as well.

But his mistake is a very common one. A great many people, though they wouldn't say it, get yet into the way of thinking that God is in one place and not in another. They think He is in the Church—and then they are very good; but they think He isn't in the street or the business—and then they are very bad. And I have known some people who were very good when they were at home—in their own place, where everybody knew them; but as soon as they went away from home to a great city or to a foreign land, became suddenly very wicked. You see, though they didn't say it, yet the god they had been thinking about was a little parish god; and as soon as they got out of that parish they fancied they had left him behind them. But they hadn't: God was in the valleys as well as on the hills—in the foreign land as well as at home; and when they sinned He saw them—He was standing by them—for there is nothing we can hide from Him, go where we will.

There is no place—*no place*—where God is not. Did you ever find a place where a stone did not drop to the ground as soon as you let go your hold of it? You never did. Why does it drop? Because God commands it. Did you ever find a place where a flame burnt downwards rather than upwards? You never did. Why does it shoot up, rather than down? Because God commands it. Wherever you go, all the world over, these things are so—and they



are so because God is there. It is because He is keeping watch over you that your heart keeps beating when you are asleep and in the darkness, and it is because He is standing by your side that you are kept breathing—even when you are far away from your own home. 'All places are places of His dominion': never, never can we get away from God, and nothing, nothing can hide what we are doing, or what we are saying, from Him. He is beside us in the church, and He is beside us in the school: He hears the loud word, but He hears the low whisper too: He sees in the light and He sees in the dark—and He sees what we think as well as sees what we do—the proud look and the hard, bad thought, the wicked feeling in our heart as well as the wicked thing we wish or intend to do.

Does this make you afraid? It should: it should make you afraid of the only thing to be afraid of—afraid of sinning—afraid of saying or doing anything that is wrong in God's eyes. But when you mean to be God's, and to do His will, and to love Him and live for Him, what a bright, glad, happy thing it is to know that He is with us everywhere and with us always! There is no harm can come to anybody when God is taking care, for God is stronger than everything, and there is never a wrong road we can go upon when we are trusting God and letting Him guide us, for He is the wisest of all. God is a God of the valleys as well as of the hills: He is with us where the shadows fall thick as well as with us where the mountain tops sparkle like fire with the sunshine—and the best of all is, wherever we are, and however we are, if we are trusting in Jesus we can call this God—this great, great God—our God, our very own. So go through the world with your heads high, and your eyes bright, and your hearts pure, for wherever you go you will find God—your own God—there before you, waiting to bless you on hill and valley both.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 219.

### TRUE AND FALSE FRIENDS

'And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?'.—1 KINGS XXI. 20.

I REMEMBER once seeing a singular thing. I had gone to see one of the royal castles of the kings of Prussia, at a place called Potsdam, not far from Berlin. The castle stands on the summit of a rising ground, in the midst of far-spreading parks and gardens. After wandering along beautifully kept walks from the gateway through which you enter the grounds, you come to a pond full of hundreds of gold and silver fishes, which rise to the surface to devour the pieces of bread which children throw in to them. Then you ascend numbers of terraces, rising one above another, all bright with flowers of every hue; and there at the top of the ascent stands the palace before you. It is a beautiful building, and recalls many memories of the famous men and women who have tenanted it. On the left side of it, at a little distance, there stands a very fine octagonal building, which is

a picture gallery filled with famous works of art. But on the right side, at about the same distance, there stands the strangest building to be seen in such a place. It is a mill, very old-looking, with its roof covered with gray moss, and, sticking aloft in the air, one long arm of the sails with which it used to catch the wind which drove it. You naturally ask how such an odd object happens to be there. The story is this. When the king who founded the palace wished to construct a residence for himself on this beautiful knoll, he bought up the land from the persons to whom it belonged. But the miller was unwilling to sell the mill where his forefathers had worked and he had been brought up. He was offered any price he chose to ask for it, but still he refused. Of course, the king might have taken it by force; but although he was a strong and fierce king he was righteous, and said, 'Well, if the miller refuses to sell his mill, I cannot take it from him; there it must stand'. And there it stands to this day. The king is long since dead; the miller is long since dead, and his descendants have gone elsewhere; but the mill is still allowed to stand in the midst of the garden and beside the palace, as a witness to the fact that the king, though powerful, was also just.

How unlike this was to the conduct of king Ahab. Ahab had a palace in Jezreel, and beside it lay the vineyard of a poor man named Naboth. The king cast his greedy eyes on this little bit of land, and wished to make it a kitchen-garden for his palace. He was the owner of many palaces and gardens, and all the country was his; but yet he coveted Naboth's little plot.

In this story there are three things which I wish you to notice: (1) The cowardice of guilt; (2) Friends mistaken for enemies; and (3) Enemies disguised as friends.

**1. The Cowardice of Guilt.**—Why did Ahab cower like a dog before Elijah? He was the king; he had might on his side; he had armies at his back. Elijah stood alone, with no weapon in his hand, with not a single soldier to defend him. Yet Elijah stood there, towering in majesty, as if he were the king over Ahab; and Ahab quailed before him like a coward and a slave.

How was this? It was because Elijah had an ally in Ahab's own breast, far more powerful than all the soldiers of his realm, and from which his soldiers could not defend him. This was his conscience, which the appearance of Elijah had awakened, and which told him he was a guilty man. A guilty conscience can make a coward even of a king.

Some of the older children may have read a story which this scene recalls—the story of Macbeth. He coveted the crown of King Duncan; and in order to get it he and his wife resolved to murder him when he was their guest. He shrank from the bloody deed; but Lady Macbeth, who was a woman just like Jezebel, urged him on; and in the dead of night he did the deed. But as soon as the guilt had stained his soul his conscience awoke. Through the midnight

silence he thought he heard a voice crying, 'Thou shalt sleep no more; Macbeth hath murdered sleep'. Every sound thrilled him with terror; and at last the whips of conscience drove him mad.

Our conscience has been placed by God within us to make us cowards when we sin. You know how a boy who is telling a lie hangs his head and dares not look you in the face. You know how the thief skulks away from his fellow-creatures, and is startled by every swaying bush and rustling leaf, lest the messengers of justice should be on his track. Perhaps you may know from your own experience what it is to have a guilty secret, how it makes you ashamed to look in the eyes of those you love, how it haunts you in your dreams by night, how it burns in your mind, until you have confessed it.

It may be possible to forget the misery of it for a time; but it can only be for a time. Ahab had an hour or two of enjoyment in Naboth's vineyard; he walked about on the sunny terraces, he plucked and sucked the ripe grapes, he thought how fine a garden this rich soil would make for him. He was able for a little to forget the crime by which his joy had been bought. But his joy was short-lived. As he put his hand on the gate of the vineyard to come out, there was Elijah standing in his way; and immediately conscience awoke and began to lash his cowardly soul.

The joy which is bought with guilt is always short-lived. We may keep our guilty secret concealed for a time; but some day our Elijah will stand in our path, and it will all be known. Be sure your sin will find you out. Very likely it may find you out in time; but at all events it will be made naked and open at the judgment-day.

**II. Friends Mistaken for Enemies.**—Ahab called Elijah his enemy. 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' He thought him his enemy, and hated him as an enemy, because he did not encourage him in his sins as others did, but reproved him, and tried to turn him from them. Elijah was the best friend Ahab had, but he was mistaken for an enemy. If Ahab had followed Elijah's advice it would have been well for himself and well for the country over which he ruled. Elijah loved the country, and he would have been the first to love and honour the king of the country if he had been deserving of honour and love. Yet Ahab called him his enemy.

Perhaps these two may remind you of two personages in the history of our own country not unlike them. You have all read about Mary Queen of Scots, the beautiful and clever queen who ruled over this country three hundred years ago. There was a man in Scotland at that time who used to appear before her, as Elijah appeared before Ahab, and reprove her for her sins. He was John Knox, the Scottish reformer. But poor Queen Mary thought Knox was her enemy. She hated him, and shed many tears of vexation at his rebukes. But in reality he was the best friend she had. He loved the country over which she ruled with all his heart, and would gladly have died for it; he would have been the foremost to love

and honour the queen, if she had deserved to be loved and honoured; and if she had taken his advice she would have been a happy woman, and escaped all the misery which marked her sad career. But she mistook her best friend for her worst enemy.

People are very apt to regard those as enemies who do not comply with their wishes, but reprove them for their faults. Children are particularly in danger of falling into this mistake. You are at a time of life when you have very little knowledge of what is best for you; but God has given you friends whose duty it is to watch over you until you reach the age when you will be able to judge and act rightly for yourselves. These are your parents and your teachers. But sometimes your desires for what you ought not to have are very strong and clamorous; and when your friends have to go against your wishes, and make you see and feel that you have done wrong, you are tempted to think they are enemies instead of friends.

There are people who take God for their enemy just as Ahab called Elijah by this name. Surely sin can never deceive us so completely as when it leads us to this horrible mistake. There are people who would rather do anything than spend half an hour alone with God; and the great terror of their life is to have to go and meet Him when they die. Do you ever feel anything like this? Are you afraid of God? Would you be afraid to speak with Him? Would you be afraid to be alone with Him? Oh, surely this is the worst that a guilty conscience can do. If you have any such feeling go to God and confess it; ask Him to take away the sin which makes you think thus of Him; and then you will be afraid no longer, but delighted to be near him and to speak with him, for you will know that instead of being your enemy, he is your greatest friend.

**III. Enemies Disguised as Friends.**—Ahab mistook his greatest friend for his greatest enemy, and it was but natural that he should mistake his real enemies for friends. The two things go together. He thought Jezebel was his friend when she got him the vineyard he coveted. He thought the magistrates his friends who so basely put Naboth to death. He thought the prophets of Baal his friends who daily feasted at his table and flattered him with their smooth tongues, which were such a contrast to the rough tones of Elijah. These he thought to be his friends; but they were ruining both him and his country. They were his worst enemies; and at last they brought him to a miserable end, when the dogs licked his blood and feasted on his wife's corpse in the very spot which had been dyed with the blood of Naboth.

We are very apt to take those for our friends who gratify our wishes, even when they are wrong, and flatter instead of reprove our faults. But we may be taking the first step to destruction when we put our hand under a false friend's arm.

How shall we know these false friends?

You may be certain any one is a false friend who encourages you to act contrary to the wishes of your

parents. If you have made a friend of any one who urges you to stay out at night or to stay from church part of the Sabbath, and to do other things which cause anxiety and pain at home, that is a false friend. If there be any one you have begun to associate with whom you cannot mention at home, or whom it grieves your parents to see you keeping company with, that is a false friend.

Further, you may be sure he is a false friend who encourages you to do anything contrary to the wishes of your Father in heaven. A bad man cannot be a true friend. Have you a companion who is untruthful, whose heart is impure, whose words are foul, and who is filling your mind with guilty secrets? Flee from him, fling him off as you would a serpent from your arm. He may be in the disguise of a friend; but he is a real enemy.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 181.

### TRUTHFULNESS

'Nothing but that which is true.'—1 KINGS XXII, 16.

It is one of the duties of the children of God to be obedient to those under whose care God has placed them, and to obey them cheerfully, promptly, and lovingly. We must not only obey because it is our duty to obey, but we must obey out of love—because we love God so much that we will not offend Him by being disobedient.

Another of the duties of God's children, quite as great a duty as obedience, is the duty of always speaking the truth, and that, not only because it is our duty, but because we love God too much to offend Him by ever being untruthful.

We offend God as much by being untruthful as by being disobedient.

I have just spoken of truthfulness as being one of the duties of the children of God, and so it is; but I am sure others have told you that before, when they have been teaching you the Catechism; for in the Catechism you learn that it is part of our duty to our neighbour to 'keep our tongues from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; and also 'to be true and just in all our dealings'. And this is not only our duty to our neighbour, but to God, as well as our neighbour, for we cannot 'serve Him truly all the days of our life,' if at one moment we are using our lips to sing His praises in chapel, and a few minutes later when we come out of chapel, we use those same lips which have just been praising God, to displease Him by evil speaking and lying, and by saying unkind things about people; for to do this would be forgetting altogether our duty to God, and forgetting why he has given us our lips.

I will tell you why God has given us lips. He has given us lips that we may always use them to His glory; and there is a little verse—only just a few words—which each one of you can see for yourself on the very first page of your hymn book, and that verse is there to remind us that our lips are to be used to the glory of God. This is the verse, 'Young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name

of the Lord,' and then follow all those hymns for us to sing to the praise of His name, many of which we have sung to-day, in church and chapel. But I want you to see that it is not only by singing the hymns and Psalms that we can use our lips to the glory of God, but we can *always* use our lips to God's glory, out of church as well as in church; and if we use them otherwise we shall have to answer for it, one day; for the Bible tells us that 'every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment'.

There are endless numbers of ways for us to use our lips to God's glory, and perhaps, as time goes on, I shall have opportunities of telling you what some of these ways are; but we will think of just one way of glorifying God with our lips, and that is by always speaking the truth with them.

I am going to do my best to tell you of two ways of speaking the truth.

I. Speaking the truth in word.

II. Speaking the truth in deed.

We will think first of speaking the truth in word, by keeping our tongues from lying.

There long ago lived a very dear Child, the most wonderful Child the world ever saw. We don't know very much about His childhood, but I have told you that a very obedient child He was, and He was not only very obedient but also very truthful, for 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth'. Guile means deceit and lying. He never once used His lips to tell a lie with them. Now, I'm sure you know quite well who that Child was. It was Jesus Christ, the children's Saviour, and He wants to see all His children trying very hard to be like Himself as a child.

One of the ways to be like that Child is to be truthful both in word and deed. The children's Saviour was once a little Child on earth, like you, and like we all have been, but now He lives in heaven at God's right hand in glory. But although He is there on His glorious throne, He still loves children, and hopes to have all His children with Him one day in heaven, for He said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'. But though He longs to have all the dear children with Him in heaven, He will not have them there to live with Him unless they try to please Him and to be like Him, and one way that we must pray to Him to help us to be like Him is to be perfectly truthful.

The Bible tells us we shall not go to live with Jesus in heaven if we are not truthful, for 'there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that . . . maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life'—and this shows us very plainly we shall not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life if we tell lies. A little further on the Bible says, 'Without is . . . whosoever loveth and maketh a lie'. Without; outside heaven; shut out of heaven. What an awful thing to think of. But if we tell lies we *shall* be shut out of heaven.

No doubt you have often seen the pond in Queen's



Park when you have been there. Now if that pond, instead of being full of water, was burning with fire and brimstone, what an awful thing it would be if anyone fell into it; what agonies he would suffer. But this is what we *shall* have to suffer in the next world if we tell lies now. This is what being 'without' means, for the Bible tells us 'all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone'.

How careful we must be then, always to use our lips to God's glory, as he intends, and that not only to sing His praises with them, but always to speak the truth with them, when we see how much depends on it. 'Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord, but they that deal truly are His delight.' If we don't use our lips to God's glory on earth, by telling the truth with them, we shall not sing His praises with them in heaven; but instead of living with Jesus in that beautiful place He longs to welcome us to, we shall have to live with Satan, the father of lies, and we shall remember then that if we only had been more careful to use our lips as God intended, we might have been living with Jesus.

So you see one kind of lie is quite as bad as another, whether it is in word or in deed, whether it is told with the lips or without them. All lies are equally hateful to God, and He will punish all lies equally severely. Each time we tell a lie we break that promise we made when we were baptised—'manfully to fight under Christ's banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end'.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 55.

### A CHANCE ARROW

'And a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.'—I KINGS XXII. 34.

WHEN Ahab, King of Israel, conquered Benhadad the King of Syria at Aphek, he spared him on condition that he would give up all the cities which his father had taken. But Benhadad failed to keep his promise, so far as Ramoth-Gilead was concerned. Hence, when Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, was visiting Ahab, he promised to help him take Ramoth-Gilead. With their combined forces they marched against Benhadad. Ahab, fearing that his enemy would make a mark of him, disguised himself, that is, took off his royal robes and went into the battle as a common soldier, while Jehoshaphat went in his own robes. The Syrian king did exactly what Ahab thought he would. He told his captains to fight with no one, small or great, save only with the King of Israel, thinking, I suppose, that if he could kill the king, he would easily conquer the subjects. The captains saw Jehoshaphat with his royal robes, and said, 'Surely this is the king,' and turned aside to fight against him. Then Jehoshaphat made it known that he was not Ahab, so they ceased pursuing him.

Search as they would, these thirty-two captains could not find the man they wanted, upon finding

whom the battle was to turn. Then one of the soldiers, taking aim at one of the enemy, draws his bowstring to his ear, and away flies the arrow. He hits the man he was aiming at, taking him as a common soldier. The arrow pierced through at the joints between the breastplate and lower armour, and brought down, not a common soldier, but the King of Israel.

Thus, what the captains with their special commission failed to do, this non-commissioned man did.

In our words and deeds we are often like this Syrian soldier, shooting chance arrows—arrows well aimed at something, but striking a target we had not expected.

I. It is often so in the *things we do*. Some of the greatest consequences come out of the smallest deeds.

There is a boy blowing soap-bubbles, as I suppose we all have done. He thought of nothing much but the beauty and size of the bubble, and how long it would last before it would burst. But Newton, the great philosopher, watched him, and was helped to some of his most important discoveries in optical instruments. Yes, much may come even out of our bubble-blowing.

When the Danes were invading Scotland, they prepared for a night attack on the sleeping garrison. When near, they crept along barefoot, and had almost reached the spot, when one of the Danish soldiers stepped on a great thistle, which made him cry out. The cry aroused the sleepers, and all sprang to arms, with the result that the Danes were driven back.

I believe that the idea of printing was first suggested by a man cutting his name in the bark of a tree, and then getting an impression of it on paper which he placed over it.

You will all be able to recall many other instances of the same fact, that often the small chance deeds of life work the greatest results. The most important arrow of all shot on this battle-field was the one of our text, and the archer thought nothing about it.

These chance arrows are shot by us when we are doing things about which we say, 'Oh, it's *no use*'. If anyone had told this man of our text that he might likely shoot the king and win the battle, he would have laughed at the idea and said, 'Not I'.

We often can't see how we can do a particular thing, and therefore don't try. Some of those who have won the greatest distinction in school, when they began would have said, if questioned, 'It is not much use for me to try, I am not clever'. Never mind, shoot the arrow you have got, and who can tell what it will lead to.

When we say about something, 'it doesn't matter,' we may be shooting an arrow which will matter very much. The boy cheating at marbles, the girl careless about her friendships, the young man giving up church-going, and a host of others say, 'Oh, it doesn't matter'. But the arrow hits a mark we did not expect.

A brother and sister were strolling through a field and came upon a nest of rabbits. The sister was delighted with the pretty little things, but the brother laughed at her, and seized the rabbits, tormented them, and then threw them up in the air, letting them fall and kill themselves. He enjoyed this cruel pastime, though his sister besought him with many tears not to do it. Ten years afterwards he was hung for shooting a farmer, while poaching. He said to his sister, almost heart-broken, 'Do you remember the nest of rabbits ten years ago, how you begged and prayed, and I ridiculed? I verily believe that from that day God forsook me, and left me to follow my own inclinations. If I had yielded to your tears then, you and I would not be weeping these bitter tears now.'

What did a rabbit matter? But the cruel deed mattered everything.

II. We are often like this soldier in *the words we speak*.

We say perhaps a wrong word without thinking about it, and our younger brother hears and never forgets it.

The unkind word escapes our lips without any purpose in our heart to really hurt anybody, but it goes like a poisoned arrow into another heart.

It is just as true of the good words of our life.

The minister prepares carefully what he wants to speak to the people, but it is sometimes the unprepared word that does the good. One who had very joyously found Christ said to her minister afterwards in explaining it to him, 'It was that word "trust" that did it'. He would not have thought of that chance word being the helping one.

Shoot all the chance arrows of kind, helping words you can, for you never know what they may do.

A lady bought a paper of a ragged, dirty newsboy, and with a smile dropped a few extra pennies into his sooty hand, saying, 'Buy you a pair of mittens; aren't you cold?' He replied, 'Not since you smiled'.

So even a smile may be like a chance arrow, carrying not death, but joy and cheer.

Let us learn from our Syrian soldier that there are really no unimportant deeds or words.

A deed is great not always in itself, but in what it accomplishes. And those we think the least of are sometimes the most serious. Therefore, be careful about the chance words and deeds.—F. B. CowI, *Digging Ditches*, p. 49.

## THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

### ELISHA

'The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.'—2 KINGS II. 15.

To follow a great and successful man in office is a far more difficult and delicate matter than is at first sight supposed. The natural thought uppermost in our minds would be that the responsibilities of the office are made far easier for a successor by the ability of the forerunner. And especially when the office in question was, as in Elisha's case, the duty of governing others, we must assume that he found the task of organisation and instruction easier than if he had been the founder of the school of the prophets which Elijah established. And this, so far as it goes, is true enough.

But, on the other hand, one can hardly fail to see that all horn leaders of men would really prefer to follow a predecessor who had failed rather than one who had succeeded. It is the tendency of the human mind, especially of those who are ruled and expect guidance, to compare mentally the powers of one leader with those of another; and when changes are made in a *régime* that has been strong, the mind of the governed naturally resents or criticises them, seeming as they do a stigma on the methods of a man who has already proved his power. If, on the contrary, we attempt to modify nothing, and merely drop into the groove of our predecessor, men will be apt to fancy we have no power of initiative, no man-governing force. And therefore, when we succeed a strong man, though we have no difficulty in keeping touch with the methods already at work, yet we shall find a greater difficulty in gaining the respect and reverence of the men over whom we rule. This, then, was Elisha's case, on whom, we are told, a double portion of Elijah's spirit fell when his master was removed from his head.

Now, two things are noticeable; first, that Elisha, directly Elijah was taken away, did what a modest but strong man would do. He invoked the power of Elijah to aid his own. As he lashed the waters of Jordan with his cloak, there was force as well as modesty in the turn of the expression, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'

And the second point to be noticed is, that beyond question, both in outward appearance and in inward character, the two men were strangely unlike. Elijah is always pictured in Sacred Writ as the John Baptist of the Old Testament. From the first he is a recluse—whether on the top of Carmel he confronted the priests of Baal, or led an outcast's life in the deserts of Jericho by the Cherith brook. 'I only am a prophet of the Lord.'

On the other hand, Elisha is always to be found accompanied. By birth he was a yeoman and of substantial means. Elijah found him ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he with the twelfth. We can picture him that day in the fields of Abelmeholah, in the fertile plain of Issachar, five miles westward of the stream of Jordan—a contented, prosperous man. What a contrast to the strange ascetic whose fame he had heard whispered ever since the great scene on Carmel's height fifty miles away! And yet, when the prophet's mantle fell on his shoulders, he knew and accepted the mission laid on him with unhesitating decision. We have no record that he had had any warning. The fact that the prophetic fire kindled within him at once shows that the spark had long lain dormant in his breast, and only needed the breath of God to kindle it into flame. 'He arose and ministered unto him.'

I. But let us turn for a moment from the incidents of the call itself to ask ourselves what the prophetic mission really meant. I venture to think that the modern sense of the word 'prophet' has tended to mislead us as to the principal function of the Scripture prophet, which was not to *foretell*, but to *preach*. First and foremost he was a preacher—a *predicator*, not a *predictor*; one who spoke God's Word *before the people*, rather than one who spoke *before the time*. His chief duty, his chief power, lay in the continual study of God's Word and works in the past, and in guiding God's people in the present to live lives conformably to His will. It is true, indeed, that this power naturally involved prediction of the future; for what man is there who has studied God's will as manifested in the past but furnishes himself thereby with material for the knowledge of the world that is to be?

But, after all, this is only the secondary characteristic of the true prophet—which is and was to be the preacher of the day—to tell God's present will to the hearts of those whom they live to serve.

II. But to return to Elisha. It is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that more miracles are recorded as being wrought by the power of Elisha than by any other prophet of the Old Testament. His life, we may say, was a tissue of prodigies; so that, I suppose, if any one were called upon to discuss the dealing of the Almighty with His people by means of miracles, he would take the life of Elisha as his text, as it were, on this subject. It is neither the time nor the place now to deal with the subject of miracles; but may I venture to say one thing? Is it not conceivable, is it not reasonable, is it not—I had almost added—necessary, is it not, at any rate, the historical fact,



that God did not reveal Himself to His creatures all at once, but hid Himself as it were in the cleft of the rock, when He showed Himself to the simple intelligence of those early races who had no knowledge of scientific laws, and so worked by miracles then as now He works by order? Yes, as once He showed almighty power by the thunders of Sinai, and the gushing rock in the thirsty land, and by the stay of nature's wheel in the valley of Ajalon, so in these modern days, when men's eyes are enlightened to behold His power, He works by continuance and not by interruption, in the sequence of the seasons, in the succession of day and night, and in the inevitable law that the sins of our ancestors shall be traceable from generation to generation in the moral and physical deformity and suffering of the children's children.

III. But, to return once more to Elisha. Time would fail me to speak of the peculiar gifts of healing which he possessed so abundantly. There are moral and spiritual truths to be gleaned from such miracles.

The story, for instance, of the leper of Syria teaches us, among other lessons, two great and important truths—the danger of narrow-mindedness, and the danger of over-estimating ourselves; of narrow-mindedness in imagining that the groove, religious or otherwise, in which we are accustomed to run is not only the best of all grooves, but that all others are contemptible in God's sight. Abana and Pharpar are to some of us, all our lives, better than all the waters of Jordan, and therefore so often our moral leprosy remains; nor is it unusual for us to get angry like the Syrian grandee when we do not get the respect and deference to which we think our qualities and our position entitle us. We fancy, like Naaman, that even our shortcomings and grievances are such as entitle us to respect, and we vainly expect people to come out and strike their hands over the place and recover the leper.

And then we fain would touch upon that extremely difficult miracle connected with the cursing of the children at Bethel—one of those miracles of violence, on which, as on the perishing of the swine in the New Testament, commentators have exhausted ingenuity to make difficulties perhaps more difficult still. Just as no man, whose religion is more than a superstition, whose reason is unclouded, and who dare not, as I dare not, please God with a lie, can ever approve of the conduct of a Jael when she outraged the very elementary laws of the sacredness of hospitality, and slew Sisera like a tigress rather than a woman—just as no reasonable man can believe that God was pleased with such atrocious conduct, so can no one, who believes that the God of justice never punishes sinners with a penalty out of all proportion to the sin, feel wholly happy without some explanation—which will be some day, God grant, forthcoming—of the terrible character of the punishment—which overtook the children of Bethel who mocked the prophet.

Elisha's power did not cease with his death.

For what saith the Scripture? 'And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.'

Yes, the power of the great and good does not die with their death. Though their bones lie rotting in the grave, their spirit liveth for evermore.—H. BRANSTON GRAY, *Men of Like Passions*, p. 177.

### THE TWO SHE BEARS

'And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.'—2 KINGS II. 24.

IN Bible times bears, which are now very scarce and confined to a few remote places in the mountains of Lebanon, were very common, and might be seen at any time among the hills all over the Holy Land. There was a thick wood of oak-trees between Jericho and Bethel, through which the high road passed, and this wood was the haunt of bears. People were afraid to go that way, and they never went alone, but always in companies. But the Prophet Elisha had no fear of wild beasts, and he often went backwards and forwards, alone, between Jericho and Bethel. He had the fear of the Lord before his eyes, and therefore he knew no other fear. The purity of his own heart, and the loftiness of his own mission, formed a shield of protection over him. The wild animals recognised his sovereignty. He had the original dominion over the wild beasts, with which God had endowed man at his creation, brought back to him. Jesus in this same wilderness of Jericho, we are told, was with the wild beasts, which crouched at His feet in meekness and submission. One of the grandest pictures in the world, the 'Last Supper of St. Jerome' in the Gallery of the Vatican Palace at Rome, represents the aged saint with the faithful lion that shared his solitude in the cave of Bethlehem by his side. And the old monkish legends tell us of St. Saba, who founded the grand monastery of Mar Saba in the wilderness of Judea, not far from Jericho, and who lived for years in a cave in the rocks with a lion as his companion, that was perfectly obedient to him in everything. These stories, though probably fables, have yet a kernel of truth in them, for they reveal to us in a striking form the power which human goodness has over the animal creation. You remember the poet Spenser's beautiful conception of Una, with her sweet innocence and purity, subduing the fierce lion and making it her slave. If our will is in accordance with the will of God, all things will respect us and minister to us.

I. Elisha was shielded by his holiness. He was engaged in the work of the Lord, and therefore he went up fearlessly through the steep defile between Jericho and Bethel, although it was bordered with woods full of wild beasts. You remember how Luther said that he would go up to the Diet of

Worms though every slate on every house-roof by the way was a devil seeking to prevent him. But while the holiness of Elisha protected him from the wild beasts, it did not protect him from his fellow-creatures. The young men of Bethel were gathered at the entrance of the town, just where the pathway emerged from the dark shadows of the wood, out of curiosity to see the chance passer-by. At Bethel there was a school of the prophets, and a number of young men were being educated there in the fear of the God of Israel. But there was also at Bethel a temple for the calf worship of Egypt, which Jeroboam had introduced; and the young men who watched for the coming of Elisha no doubt belonged to the idolatrous families connected with that strange calf worship. They would therefore hate the servants of the true God, and take pleasure in insulting them, just as Mohammedan youths at the present day often throw stones at, and utter scornful threats against, Christian travellers at Nablous and Hebron. The young men of Bethel had been accustomed to see Elijah coming up to their town from Jericho, and his long hair falling over his shoulders, and his wild appearance, filled them with respect and even awe. But Elisha had his hair shorn close round his head, and in comparison with the shaggy Elijah was bald, and he looked so meek and gentle that they were not a bit afraid of him, but with the license of rude Eastern youths they scoffed at him and cried, 'Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head'.

II. For once Elisha assumed the sternness of Elijah, and out of the soft summer cloud came the terrible stroke of lightning. He made an awful example of these scoffing youths, so that the idolatrous town might never forget it. It was a terrible punishment; but the Bethel young people had behaved like bears, and they were punished in the same way. Their irreverence to the prophet was the outcome of their irreverence towards God. They took their conception of God from the animal rather than from the spiritual part of their nature. They worshipped a calf in the hallowed shrine of Bethel. And so it came to pass that the animal part of their own nature prevailed over the spiritual. But man is far more and better than a beast. As soon, therefore, as he suffers the beast in him to prevail, he not only sinks below the level of mankind, he grows worse than the beasts and sinks below their level. What they do by the law of their nature, he does against the law of his nature; and sinning against the law he ought to obey, he grows steadily worse and worse. We do not wonder, therefore, that the youthful worshippers of such a mean and foul god as the golden calf of Bethel should be guilty of disrespect to grey hairs, and of sacrilege to the servant of the living and true God. They who made such a god became like their god; and it was appropriate that they should be punished in the line of their offence. As they worshipped a beast, so they were devoured by beasts. As they had debased their souls to worship a calf, so their bodies were debased to be eaten up by bears. God fulfilled

His threatening, 'I will meet them as a bear that is bereft of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their hearts; and there will I devour them'.

III. The lesson of this tragic story is the sin of irreverence. If you have no reverence you lose the image of God in which you were created, and you become a mere part of the creation instead of its lord and master. If you worship, like the people of Bethel, the golden calf of brute power, evil lust, material good; if you lower your nature to the level of carnal earthly things, then the powers of evil will overcome you at every turn; you will become a prey to the wild beasts of temptation and passion. But if you have the reverence for God which Jesus had for His Heavenly Father, then you will become like Him, and you will reverence all who are like Him.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 219.

#### ON CUTTING DITCHES

'And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches: for thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet this valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle and your beasts.'—2 KINGS III. 16, 17.

If I were to tell you at once, and without explanation, that *your main business in life is to cut ditches in dry valleys*, very likely some of you would laugh, and some would be puzzled, and all of you, I hope, would end by asking me what I meant. I will try and tell you what I should mean, what I do mean.

I. Now, mark. This great army, shut up in the dry and thirsty valley, had to dig ditches, to cut trenches, which were to hold a water they could not see, no trace or sign of which they could see. No rain was falling on the mountains; no cold damp wind was blowing, and foretelling, as it blew, the approach of rain. So that they had to dig on at what seemed a useless task; they had to cut trenches, though there was no water to run into them, and no sign that any water was coming, in pure faith that what the prophet told them would turn out true, and that the water would come if only the trenches were dug. I can well believe that when the prophet said *Dig*, more than one gruff veteran of the camp said, 'I dig, when I am so weary and like to die of thirst! I am not such a fool. What does Elisha know of the weather? Can't I, who have seen more of the weather than he has, read the signs as well as he? There is not a cloud in the sky, nor is there a breath of air to cool the intolerable heat of this stony wilderness. Let others dig if they will; I will not.' And yet, reasonable as this man's argument and resolve would seem at the moment, you know that he would have been wholly in the wrong; and that, after all, it was much more reasonable to believe what the prophet said, with whom was the word of the Lord, and to act on the counsel he gave.

But if these soldiers were called to a task which seemed at the time quite useless and unreasonable, are not *you* called to such tasks every day? And if they had to obey the call because they trusted the

words of one who was wiser than they were, are not you every day called to trust in the wisdom and kindness of those who know more of human life than you do, and who are seeking to equip and prepare you for it?

Why, see, how many things you have to do at home which you do not in the least like to do, simply because your father and mother know it will be best for you to do them. Some of you don't like to get up when you are called; and hardly any of you, I am afraid, like to go to bed so soon as you are told to go. You often want to eat viands which you are not allowed to eat, or to read books which you are not allowed to read, or to play when you are compelled to work. You are taught not to use words you would like to use, and not to indulge tempers and passions which you would like to indulge. From the very first your parents have to say to you, 'Come,' 'Go,' 'Do this,' or 'Don't do that'. Every day, and all day long, unless you have learned to rule yourselves and to find pleasure in doing your duty, you have to be checked, guided, persuaded, punished even: and all for what? To you it must often seem unreasonable that you should be told to do this when you don't at all want to do it, and not to do that when that is exactly what you most want to do. You don't see any sense in all this, any more than the Hebrew soldiers saw any sense in being set to dig trenches in a dry valley when there was no sign of rain. But there *was* sense, and very good sense, in the command which, whether they liked it or not, they had to obey. And, as a rule, there is very good sense in the commands and prohibitions given to you. What your parents are really aiming at, though you may not see it, is to get you to form habits, good habits, and to train capacities, which by and by, when you are grown men and women, will be of the greatest service to you. They want you to learn to rule and restrain yourselves while you are young, because they know you *must* be able to rule and restrain yourselves if you are to live usefully and happily, if you are not to be passionate and sinful, miserable and degraded. They want you to be thoughtful, obedient, diligent, well-spoken and well-mannered, gentle and considerate for others, because they know that these habits and ways will be most useful to you by and by; because if you do not acquire them now, you will suffer for it as long as you live. In short, they set you to dig trenches the use of which you cannot see, because by and by these trenches will be filled with a water that will strengthen and refresh you as long as you walk the earth, and even prepare you to breathe the air and share the blessedness of heaven.

II. Again, consider your life at school. I am always a little sorry for children who have to go to school, and yet do not take kindly to the place, or to anything they learn in it—they are so miserable, and to them it seems so unreasonable that they should be mewed up in close crowded rooms poring over books the very sight of which they hate, when every drop of blood in their bodies is calling out for green

fields, and rough games, and fresh air. But if any of you dislike school and learning, you may be sure that you are sent to school only for your good. You don't suppose, do you, that anybody *likes* to teach children who do not want to learn? or that your parents or your teachers hate you so much that they all conspire to do what they do not like to do, simply in order to make you miserable? They *can* have no motive but your welfare.

An intelligent and educated man or woman finds knowledge and amusement everywhere: but how are you to be educated and intelligent if you will not learn? The world is full of living water; but it runs very quickly by, and only those who have dug trenches that will hold it will be much the better for it. Try to remember this; and when you are next put to any school task which you do not like and the use of which you do not see, say within yourselves: 'Never mind; my book is my spade; and I've got to dig a trench with it: some day, when I am thirsty, I may find it full of bright sparkling water.'

We are preparing channels through which one day the Spirit of God may flow into your hearts, and quicken you into life everlasting. To some of you our work may seem only like digging for digging's sake; and you are content to dig only because we are kind to you, and you like to be with us and with one another. You see no cloud in the sky; you hear no sound of wind; you do not see where any water is to come from: nevertheless, the water does come, as some of you can testify. For in the holy words spoken by Christ and His Apostles, besides and beneath the letter which you can all learn, there is the spirit which giveth life; and by learning the letter you prepare the way for the coming of the spirit. Think: if any wholly untaught man, who had never heard anything about our Father or our Redeemer, were to read a few verses from the New Testament, or to hear a sermon, he could make nothing of it; sermon and verses would say nothing to him; he would not so much as know what the words meant. But *to you*, simply because you have been taught in some measure what the words of the Bible mean, a few verses, or a sermon on them, may some day say so much that you will be constrained to give your heart to God. You are, therefore, cutting trenches every Sunday; and, when *that* day comes, these trenches will be filled with the water from heaven, of which if any man drink he shall never thirst more.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 47.

#### DEATH ON A MOTHER'S KNEES

'And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

'And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

'And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.'—2 KINGS IV. 18-20.

THERE are four remarks which I think this passage proves:—



1. Children may die.
2. Children may die suddenly.
3. Children may die though their dearest friends are beside them.
4. Children may die though their friends are good, and pray for them.

I. The first remark is, **That Children may Die.**—I mean, of course, that they may die while yet children. Does this need to be proved? Here is an instance. This child is said to be grown, but he could not be very big, for a lad carried him to his mother. Perhaps he was about six or seven years of age. The lessons prefixed give you other instances. And such are occurring every day in the world around us. Indeed, a great proportion of the deaths that happen every year are the deaths of children. In the city where I lived lately I used to see every now and then a poor man passing to the graveyard, with a little coffin under his arm. Rich people bury their babes also. It is very touching to go into a place of burial, and see little mounds of earth all around, which tell that death has been gathering children into His dark house. You recollect the poet's tender lines :—

There is a reaper whose name is Death,  
And with his sickle keen  
He reaps the bearded grain, at a breath,  
*And the flowers that grow between.*

But what is it to die? Death has two parts—a part you see, a part you do not see. What you see is very sad and solemn. Perhaps you never saw anyone actually dying, but you have probably seen a dead body. How cold it is! how pale! how still! It neither hears nor speaks, nor feels, nor moves. And, alas! it must be buried out of sight, or you soon could not bear to look at it. And, therefore, after death comes the funeral, when the body is put into the ground and covered over with earth, to lie there, by and by to crumble into dust, and not be seen till Christ shall come back to the world and bid it live.

That is one consequence of death. There is another. We have souls as well as bodies. Now, the soul does not go into the grave. It goes to God who gave it. I do not know the road it takes. I do not know whether angels, that take good little children to glory, carry them away up through the clouds and past the stars. I do not know how spirits travel at all. But souls at death go to God. That is a very solemn thought. Yet why should it be a thing to be afraid of? Why should a soul be afraid to go back to Him who made it? Ah! the reason is sin. We have displeased God, and are afraid to meet Him. I have known a child that had done a wrong thing keep away all day from home, for fear of meeting his father's face; and when night came, and he felt he must go in, I have seen him creep back miserable and trembling, when he should have been rejoicing to hear his parent's voice again. Even so, sin makes us afraid of God; and death, which takes us to meet Him, can only be conquered by getting sin forgiven. That it is which makes Jesus' death so precious. And since little children may die, they ought to seek Jesus early.

II. The second remark was, **That Children may Die Suddenly.**—The little boy mentioned in the text was quite well in the morning, and at twelve o'clock he was dead. The disease he died of was probably a sunstroke, which is not likely to happen in this country. But there are other diseases which end in death almost as quickly. There is a fire-stroke, which sometimes in this country consumes in a moment. I have read somewhere the story of a wicked little boy, much given to profane language, who took refuge under a tree during a thunderstorm, and while in the act of swearing at what the Bible calls 'the voice of God,' was stricken to the ground by a flash of lightning. Ah, what a death! But children have died as suddenly, who have gone up as in a chariot of fire to heaven. 'Sudden death, sudden glory,' the old folks were wont to say. I think the little babes that died by Herod's cruel sword went to glory. And I remember one, not so young as they, whose death gave occasion to some lines that described it—a fair flower very suddenly blighted here, but flourishing still, we believe, in the paradise of God :—

One dawn had seen her prattling and fair,  
Smiling, and blooming, and strong;  
Blythe as the lark when he mounts in air,  
And carols his morning song.  
Another sun rose; and sick she lay,  
And panting hard for breath.  
A third, she was resting, a clod of clay  
In the icy embrace of death.

III. But let us pass to the third remark—namely, **That Children may Die, although their Dearest Friends are Beside Them.**—The child of the text was on his mother's knees when he died. I have no doubt she did all for him that a fond mother could do. She would hold his aching head and ask him if he felt it getting better; she would kiss him fondly and lay him on her bosom, but for all that he died. Death broke through the fence of her love and took him from her arms. Oh, it is very affecting to think how powerless we are to keep our dearest with us when the hour comes for calling them away! It is very natural for young people when ill to wish to be near their parents, or brothers and sisters, and these can do much for the sick; but when death comes he is stronger than them all. A scene rises before my memory just now. A little boy is lying on a bed; his father and his mother are sitting beside him in sad silence; each has hold of a little hand—a little flaccid, cold hand; they know that death has set his seal on their darling; even their loving grasp cannot keep those hands warm; yet a little while and their child is gone from them.

There is another thing to be noticed in the case of the Shunammite and her little boy. She was very rich and great, and yet her child died. Riches, no doubt, can help parents to ward off disease from their children and get the best skill of physicians when they are sick, but oftentimes all is in vain. Death gets into palaces as well as cottages. God has been kind to Queen Victoria, and has not allowed

death to take any of her children, and no doubt her good management and care and the right habits she teaches them have been the means; but the best care cannot always prevent death from coming into the nursery. The king of terrors, as he is sometimes called, is the strongest of all kings except one—the King of kings and Lord of lords.

IV. There remains one other remark to be considered—**Children may Die, although their Friends are Good, and Pray for Them to Live.**—The mother mentioned in the text loved God. Her conduct afterwards, as well as before, showed this. I have no doubt, therefore, that in her child's illness she prayed earnestly for him. Now, was it wrong in God not to grant her prayer? Or is it wrong in God to refuse hearing parents' prayers now for the lives of their children? Suppose that a kind friend were to put something into your hands and say, I give you this to please yourselves with but you must give it back to me whenever I ask it; would you have any right to be angry with him when he asked it back, or for refusing your entreaties to be allowed to keep it? Would you speak wisely or foolishly if you complained of him for taking it away? Now, God gives children to parents in loan, just till he is pleased to ask them back. And then he often takes them away in kindness, to keep parents from hurting themselves with idols, or hurting their children by making them idols. Suppose you saw an infant playing with a sharp knife, attracted by its glitter and knowing nothing of its edge, would you stop your endeavour to take away the dangerous weapon because the child struggled against you and cried? And will God, a wise Father, let His children destroy themselves, or forbear to save them from hurt by even bereaving them?

We have thus looked at the four remarks proved by the text. You are saying, perhaps, What a gloomy sermon—all about death! Yes; but there are two things to be said to defend such a sermon: First, never thinking about death does not prevent his coming. Thoughtlessness does not keep him away or make him travel slow. He comes on to us all the same. And secondly, the way to make death cease to be gloomy is to think much about it in the right connection. What is that? In connection with the death of Christ. It would be cruel to torture people by speaking about death if we could not tell them about Jesus. If Jesus be with you He will make death safe and happy, even though it come in childhood. And Jesus is willing to be with you. Go, then, and ask Him to keep you, living and dying. You go to Him, you know, by believing what is said about Him in the Bible and by asking Him in prayer. He will hear you, and then death will cease to be frightful. You are not afraid to lie down and go to sleep. And death to the friends of Jesus is falling asleep. Stephen is said to have fallen asleep even when they were murdering him. So in *First Thessalonians*, fourth chapter, the dead saints are said 'to sleep in Jesus'. A little boy who died

young, whose father lived near a graveyard, used to look out pleasantly at the burying-ground, and, noticing the flat stones that paved it in great numbers, say softly and sweetly, 'In my Father's house are many mansions'.

The boy whose death the text records was raised to life again. God sent his spirit back at Elisha's prayer and the prophet gave him alive to his mother. But children that fall asleep in Jesus will get a better resurrection. The Shunammite's son came back to earth—to care and sin and trial and death repeated. Good children will rise at the last day to enter heaven, never to sin again, never to be sick again, never to die more. After the night comes morning—the morning of a day without cloud or end.—*JOHN EDMOND, The Children's Church, p. 25.*

### GOD'S THOUGHTS ABOUT LITTLE PEOPLE

2 KINGS V.

I. THE STORY OF NAAMAN THE SYRIAN is one of many stories in the Bible which show us the thoughts of God about little people.

Perhaps everybody in Syria, certainly everybody in Naaman's house, thought Naaman's wife, or Naaman himself, the greatest person of the house. But in the sight of God the greatest person was the little captive out of the land of Israel, the little maid who waited on Naaman's wife.

God needed some one to remember Him in Syria and to speak for Him in Naaman's house. Naaman could not do it. He did not know God. He knew the King of Syria and the king's captains, and the fighting men; and he knew all about swords and shields, and bows and arrows, and battles. But he knew nothing about God. No more did the great lady who was his wife. He and she were mighty people in the land, but they were poor heathens all the same, and did not know God. But the little maid who served in their house knew Him. She knew more than the mighty man her master did, more than the lady she waited on did. She knew God. She was only a little girl, a mere servant, and a slave besides—one of the poorest, saddest, kinds of servants—but it was she and not any of the great people—she and no one else in all that Syrian land—whom God chose to remember Him. Of this poor, humble slave girl He said: 'This child shall be My greatest here. She shall speak for Me in this heathen land, and tell of My power and My love.'

II. THE next thing this story shows is, that it was not because this poor girl was little, or because she waited on Naaman's wife, or because she had been brought away captive out of the land of Israel, that God chose her to be His greatest servant in Syria and to speak for Him in Naaman's house. It was because she only in all that land knew God and was able to tell of His power and His love.

God does not choose people for His great places because of outside things, but only and always because there is knowledge of Him and love to Him in the heart. Big bulk or little bulk, riches or poverty, palace or

hovel, God passes these things and things like these by. He searches for knowledge of Himself, for love to Himself, and where He finds these, in high or low, in bond or free, He makes His choice. If he finds these in a hovel, and in the poorest form on earth, or in a child, even if that child should be a slave, and one who is counted nobody in the house she serves, He will not pass by, His choice will rest there. He will lift up that little child, that slave who is nobody in the house, and give her a place beside Himself, and say to her, 'Thou shalt speak here for Me'.

It was because this little captive out of the land of Israel knew God, and alone in all Syria knew Him, and because she loved Him and was good; for this reason, and for no other, God chose her to be a speaker for him.

III. The third thing this story helps us to understand is, that if the little captive out of the land of Israel knew God better and loved Him better than anybody in Syria, it was because she had been taught to do that before.

Knowledge of God does not grow up in the heart, any more than knowledge of stars or trees or books. Just like other lessons, it has to be learned and got by heart. And once on a time, on her mother's knee, or at school, in happier days, this little captive had had to learn this lesson. And not once but many times she had to learn it, and to set her whole heart on learning it. And not once but many times she had to answer when her mother or her teacher tried her to see if she had learned aright. And being in those days a mere child, I dare say sometimes, when she heard her companions shouting outside at their play, her eyes would fill with tears and she would say to herself: 'It is so tiresome to be learning lessons'. But now her life is all changed. She looks back to those days as the happy days of her life. Now also she sees the good, which then she did not see. And now, with tears of a different kind in her eyes, she thinks thankfully of the dear father and mother who kept her at her lessons and taught her concerning God.

And although this thought never came into her mind, although she never dreamed when she was telling her mistress of Samaria and the prophet there that she was doing anything great or good, it was because in the happy years of her life she had been taught to know God and love Him, that God in her sad years put this crown on her life and made her a speaker for Him.

IV. By this story we may learn next some of the reasons which God has for sending trouble to children.

Unless this little maid had suffered she could not have been just where God wanted her to be when she was needed to speak for Him. She suffered things the very hardest to bear which a child can suffer. Only a few years back—perhaps only a few months back—she was a happy little girl in one of the homes in Israel. The land of Syria, where she now was, joins on to the land where she was born. As she went out with her mistress along the Syrian roads

she could see the hills of her native land. Yes! on those very hills, blue in the distance, lie the ruins of her once happy home. As she casts her eyes that way the vision of the cottage on the hill-side comes back into her heart, and the faces and forms of the dear ones who loved her there. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, she sees them all again, she hears their voices, she joins with them in the morning and evening psalm. And then that vision passes and another comes into its place, and it is night and there is a sudden tumult on the hill. A storm of wild shouting rouses them all out of sleep. The door is burst open. Fierce soldiers burst in. She sees the blood on her father's face from his death-wound. She sees her mother tied with ropes and led away to be sold; and all the children led out, and all separated; and she is an orphan and a slave; and life has changed for her and for them for evermore.

If, when all that horror fell into her young life, she thought of God and of the Divine love her father and mother trusted in, it must have seemed a great darkness to her. Could God love them and suffer such misery to fall upon them? And what could God's thoughts concerning herself be when He suffered her to be carried away captive out of the land of Israel?

If such thoughts came into her mind at the time of her suffering, the explanation of them comes now. Now she learned why she had to pass through so much. By the steps of sorrow and bereavement she was led to Naaman's house, and to the daily spectacle of his leprosy, and into the confidence of the lady she served, and to a moment when she pitied her master with the pity of God that was in her heart, and to another moment when she told of the prophet who could heal her master, and last of all, to the happy day when she saw him returning from that prophet, after his flesh had come to him again 'like unto the flesh of a little child'.

And more than all that, although she herself could never know this, through the tribulations she suffered she passed up to a place among God's throned ones—among the saintly women and holy men who spake and acted for Him in the days of old. And although we do not know her name, God knows it, and the holy angels know it, and one day we too shall know it.

V. Now, although I have tried to mix up the lessons with the story itself, there are three which I should like to put a special mark on, because they are lessons which it is good for children to get by heart.

The first is, that you should not despise servants. Perhaps God has sent one of His angels, or helpers, in the form of a servant into your home as He sent the little maid from Israel into Naaman's.

The next is, that you should not weary over the lessons you have to learn at school. You never can know till long after—and this little maid from Israel did not know till long after—the good which lessons—especially lessons about God—will bring to those who have learned them well.



And the last is, that you should not look upon sickness and bereavement as altogether evil. 'There is good in the heart of the evil. Often they are messengers sent from God to draw you nearer to His heart. It is a trial very hard to bear when God takes father or mother away. And the home is very dark when He takes both. But for children to whom this trial is sent, as for the child who had been carried away captive out of the land of Israel, God's purpose is love. By the very things they suffer they may be prepared, as this little captive was, to be helpers of others who suffer, and in the end to bring them, as she brought Naaman, to God.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 131.

### THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID

'Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.'—  
2 KINGS V. 4.

ALTHOUGH this little maid has been dead so many years she is still teaching us one or two lessons. Let us see if we can find out what they are.

I. The first is this. To do our duty in whatever state of life we may be placed—wherever for the time being God calls us. To do our duty thoroughly and do it cheerfully. Many people in her place would have said, 'No, I shan't do this work unless I am forced to do it. I've been taken away from my country and my friends, I'm looked down upon by all the rest of the people in the house, you can't expect me to do a slave's work, and I won't do it, or if they make me work I shall do just as little as I can; I certainly won't try to do it well; and I shan't do it cheerfully.'

You may ask, 'How do you know that?' The Bible doesn't tell us she did her work as you say, 'cheerfully and well'. Yes, it is true it doesn't say so, but I am sure she did. How do I know? Because her mistress trusted her and listened to what she had to say about Elisha, this great prophet. If she had been an idle, sulky, sullen girl, we may be quite certain her mistress would have thought, 'This girl is only trying to deceive us, giving us a little hope now, so that we may have more sorrow afterwards; I don't believe what she says'. Or she might have thought, 'If I let my husband go, this man she speaks of may cause his death, that is what she is thinking of. She is not to be trusted.'

But once more, you ask me how I know she did what she was told? why, because she did even more than that. She did what she could to try and get this man her master cured, the very man who had torn her away from her parents and her friends. And so you see she teaches us all to do our duty whatever it may be and wherever it is put before us.

II. The second lesson is, To return good for evil. Naaman had made her a slave, an unhappy girl; she wanted to make him a happy man by being cured of his dreadful disease. We often hear boys and girls, yes, and grown-up people, say when some one has injured them, 'Ah! you wait, I'll pay you back when I get the chance'. Now this little girl paid her

master back, but it was in kindness; she returned good for evil.

Some people would have said to themselves if they had been in her place, 'I am very glad that Naaman is suffering, it serves him right; he has treated me very badly, he's taken me away from my country, made me a slave, and caused me a great deal of sorrow. I know who could cure him, but I'm not going to say.'

But how did *she* act? She felt sorry for her master and her mistress, too, and went to her with the story which spoke to both of them of hope.

'If my master were only in Samaria, if only he would go to Elisha, then he would come back quite cured—you would feel so happy and I should feel happy too.'

So let us learn this second lesson from the captive girl—to return good for evil: pay back the wrong people do us in kindness, then we shall be like Jesus Christ. The little maid lived a long time before He was born, yet God had taught her what Christ taught the people—that we are to love our enemies and do good to those who treat us badly. You know how He taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' and how He prayed on the cross for His enemies when He was dying, and said, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do'.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 14.

### A PICTURE OF FAITH

(A Summer Sermon)

'Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.'—2 KINGS  
VI. 17.

ELISHA took the young man and made him look at only one prospect—the country around Dothan. I wish to make you look at three wide prospects—Nature, Providence, the Bible. And as you look at each, we will put up the prayer, 'Lord, open our eyes'.

I. **Eyes Opened on Nature.**—I hope you take good long strolls into the country or along the shore on Saturdays just now. This leafy month of June is one of the most beautiful in the whole circle of the year. It is delightful to walk away out of the town for an hour or two, through the fresh grass and beside the bright hedges, and see the white and pink blossom of the hawthorn, the flaming clusters of the rhododendrons, and the drooping yellow bunches of the laburnum; to enjoy the rich scent of the lilac; to see the golden flowers of the honeysuckle, and the silver spires of the horse-chestnuts; to sit and look up at the sun-rays flashing like spears through the heavy foliage of the trees, and down at the shadows moving in a thousand changing forms over the undergrowth of ferns and wild flowers; while the birds are revelling around and above, and every breath of wind is laden with fragrance from some flowering tree or bush, or bank of wild flowers.

Now, I hope, when you are in scenes like these, you will cultivate the habit of appreciating the beauty

of them. Otherwise you will miss one of the purest pleasures on earth. There are some people specially distinguished for seeing the beauty which God has put upon His works. These are poets and painters. On the other hand, there are people who live in the midst of the most lovely scenes of Nature, and yet have no eye to see their charms. A painter may be looking on a landscape which, under some unusual effects of light, almost overcomes him with emotion, while another man in the same field looks on it without a trace of feeling. I should like your eyes to be opened to see beauty.

But this is not what I speak of when I say 'Lord, open their eyes upon Nature'. There is something else which your eyes require to be opened to see. It is God Himself—God with His love and wisdom and power. One man looks abroad over a piece of God's world and sees neither its beauty nor its Maker in it. A second looks over the same scene and sees the beauty which the first did not see, but yet does not see the Maker. But a third looks; and he is like Elisha's servant: his eyes are opened, and he sees what the first sees, and what the second sees, but also something else which neither of them has seen—he sees God passing His hand over all and dropping beauty on it from His fingers. Oh, surely men are blind who can look into the great depths of the heavens crowded with stars, on the vast and restless ocean, on the rugged grandeur of the mountains, on the valleys and plains in their summer luxuriance, and see no glimpse of the face of God and hear no rustle of His garment as He sweeps past in His beneficent omnipotence! Blinder far are they than the most horn-eyed rustic who lives in the grandest scenery without ever being visited by an idea of its beauty.

If you awaken to a sense of the beauty of the world, it will make you feel as if you had never lived before. But if your eyes be opened to see God in the world, to see Him in all His works, and constantly think of Him working with His almighty love behind all that you see, it will make the world a new world to you altogether. That sky will be sky no more, this earth will be earth no more; the simplest flower, the very drop of dew, the sparrow that flits from house to house in the street, will have voices speaking constantly to your mind of a far-off Fatherland, and of a Father who is your Father and the life of them all.

**II. Eyes Opened on Providence.**—When you look back on your life as far as you can remember, it is but a very short way you see, for you came into the world only a few years ago. And if you look in front of you, you cannot see anything at all. You may guess some things which you are going to meet, but you do not know how soon your journey may end, or what you will really meet if you travel on. But with old people it is different. They are like you in this, that they cannot see what is before them. But they can see a long way behind them.

They are like a man who, after mounting to the top of a hill, turns round and surveys the road he has

come. There it is, all down the mountain-side and away across the valley to the very spot he started from. An old man can see back that long road. Yonder is the time when he was a child; then another part of the road when he was a boy; then the hill begins to get steep, when he was a young man; farther up is the long and difficult part, when he was a man full-grown; and, lastly, the steep place he had to climb on hands and knees, when he was already an old man. It is a strange and varied road—some of it smooth and flowery, like your life now; some of it rough and thorny, when he had to contend with poverty and misfortune, when sickness and bereavement came on him and his family.

Now, suppose two old men looking back on this road together. Let me tell you what they see. One sees nothing but the bare road; times of prosperity which came to him by happy chance, successes which he gained by his own efforts; sicknesses and deaths, which appear to him mere calamities or chances such as all must face. But the other sees God all along the road; God guiding him from first to last, crowning his efforts at one place with success, disappointing him at another place with an equally kind purpose. Yonder is a place which was dreadfully dark as he came through it, but light from heaven is shining on it now; he understands it now. Yonder is a place which looked very crooked as he passed, but he sees now that this must have been an illusion of his own mind, for it is quite straight now.

This man has had his eyes opened on providence. I pray God to open your eyes on providence, that in all you undertake or suffer you may see God as your guide, and trust him; so that, whatever fortune you may be led into, you may never feel yourself alone. This will give you courage and comfort such as nothing else can give.

**III. Eyes Opened on the Bible.**—Here is still a third prospect I have to call you to look out upon, while I pray, 'Lord, open their eyes, that they may see'.

But surely it is impossible to look over this prospect—over the Bible—without seeing the horses and chariots of fire. Ah no; it is not. It is possible to read all the chapters of the Bible many times, and learn all its doctrines, and understand all its promises, with the eyes still shut.

I remember telling a friend that, in a certain congregation I was preaching to I could take it for granted that all the people knew the leading doctrines of the Bible, and appeal to them on the ground of this knowledge. But he said to me, 'Do not take so much for granted: I remember that when young I was taught all the doctrines of Scripture, and I thought I knew them; but when I was really converted, it seemed to me as if I had not known one of them before—they all came home with such a new meaning, I learned them all over again'.

It is a moment never to be forgotten when the truth which has been known and handled like a dry piece of wood for years suddenly flares forth into

bright flame; when over the meadows of the Bible, where nothing but ordinary grass appeared before, there suddenly start up the horses and chariots of fire; when this truth, for instance, 'My soul is infinitely precious and immortal,' thrills through me, and all the world seems as nothing compared with my soul. Some years ago, during the revival in which Mr. Moody was so much blessed, a young woman, a domestic servant, left Melrose and travelled up alone to London. She had a sister there, on whom she called. 'What has brought you here?' She had become anxious to be saved away down in Scotland; and hearing of the great spiritual movement in London, imagined that somehow, if she were there, she might get a blessing: she had come to see. She knew nothing of London, but went out to seek the Agricultural Hall, where she heard the meetings were held. On she went, through the streets of the great city, through the rush and roar of the busy thoroughfares. At last she reached the hall; but she was too late. Thousands of people were streaming out. Still she thought if she were inside some one would tell her what she must do. She went to all the doors, but they were blocked by the crowds passing out. At last she found the door of some committee-room. She heard the voices inside and thought the persons she wanted might be there. She tried to push the door open but could only open it a little way. Then she put her face to the opening and said, 'Let me in; I'm keen to be saved'. 'Ah, that's the voice of a Scotch lassie,' some one cried inside; and a strong hand was thrust out and drew her in. It was the hand of aged Robert Moffat, the African missionary. And they told her what she must do. An ignorant, foolish girl this! Could not Christ be found as well in Melrose as in London? But thrice blessed girl too! for the great truth had been revealed to her in a flame of fire, 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'

There are many who remember when this truth, 'I am a sinner,' shone on them for the first time in the same way. They had heard it before and believed it in a way; but they could believe it and at the same time sit still doing nothing. But at last their eyes were opened, and they could sit still no more—they arose and fled. Or that other truth, 'Jesus Christ is the Saviour': many can remember how, after hearing it a thousand times, at last they heard it with tears of joy, as a truth for them; and the face of the Lord Jesus, no longer dead, but living, breathing, entrancing, looked out on them from the Bible, and they grasped Him, saying, 'Thou art my Saviour'.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 75.

### JEHU

'The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.'—2 KINGS IX. 20.

HERE was an ignorant watchman who could have had nothing more in common with the great captain of his company than the peasant who trims the hedge-row has of my lord who rolls by in his barouche and

pair, and yet he sums him up in a character-making phrase: 'He driveth furiously'. Day after day on his lonely watch he must have watched Jehu scour the arid plain which separates rather than unites the low-lying Jezreel from the uplands of Ramoth. 'And he marked the man and the manner of his going.' He watched his eager passionate face and his desperate audacity. He knew him better than did the serene Joram, who went out to inquire the purport of his coming in the ominous meeting-place, the vineyard of the man despoiled and murdered by his father—the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Now let us, as foreigners, as separate in time and country from the great reformer, the purger of the abomination of the house of Ahab, the stalwart Puritan who shook the life out of the priests of Baal and re-established the worship of the true God—let us try to gather something from his character that may serve us for imitation, for warning, for admiration mingled perhaps with contempt. In estimating, then, his actions, I cannot help being struck with the very striking resemblance in some of his attributes to those of our great Protestant warrior and reformer, Oliver Cromwell. Jehu, like Cromwell, was the incarnation of intense vigour in thought and action—a man of force, evidently of some deep religious instinct, but one who supposed that the desire for extermination of the infidel and the immoral was a proof of his own love for God and for purity, while it really sprang partly or wholly from a love of destruction and an ambition to succeed. In the case of Jehu, as in the case of Cromwell, personal ambition was so much mixed up with regard for God, that it is difficult to say where religion ended and love of power began. Jehu was a character who, like Solomon, began well but ended badly. His morning rose, as far as we gather from the Scriptures, with a heaven of blue, but the westering sun of life was dimmed with the clouds of gloom and sin. When, on that day of call, he lay at Ramoth-Gilead, and he heard the voice of the dust-laden man of the desert cry to him, 'I have an errand to thee, O captain!' and when he received the prophetic oil on his head, the emblem of kingly rule, what a hidden fire awoke in that forceful nature! An errand! Why, it was an errand from God, clearly—the extermination of a wicked king, the overthrow of a vile idolatry! There was the occasion, and here was the man. Can we suppose that the message came on him as with a shock of sharp surprise? No occasion ever comes on great men by surprise. The materials for accomplishing what God required of him had been deep laid in his breast for many a day. Many were the little occasions which showed what was in him. There was the fuel, and the spark was supplied to lighten it into flame.

I. And to us it is not always an inspiring thought that God calls on us to do some big thing for Him? When the eyes of expecting men are on us, we, if we are strong, can always rise to the occasion. A public school boy, circumscribed as is his life, has his big occasions, and it is surprising how many of us rise



equal to them. If the prefectural body were asked to destroy some house of Baal, or to stamp on some flagrant form of notorious evil, I doubt not that we should find many Jehus driving furiously to the encounter. It is in the little details of life, when we have to act alone—not in the sight of men, perhaps—when we have to crush in ourselves or in somebody else the little detail which goes to form a principle—it is then that so many of us fail. In the little act of self-denial; in the single word of evil which you heard outside your study door, but could not bother to take any notice of; it is then that we are weak when we should be strong, lazy when we should smite.

I am wondering, as I think of Jehu, whether he would not have acted like Naaman if he had had to do some simple thing that attracted no notice and was not rewarded by the publicity of universal acclamation. If he had been told to do such an insignificant thing as to wash in Jordan, would not he too, if he had not turned away in a rage, at least have said as Hazeel did say on another occasion (if, indeed, this be the true meaning of the text), 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?'

II. I like the force of Jehu. His words are as drastic as his deeds. When the king's messenger comes to him with the salutation, 'Is it peace?' his answer is, 'What hast thou to do with peace?' or, as the Hebrew puts it, 'What has peace got to do with you and me? follow my company'. And then, when the unsuspecting Joram meets him, his answer is equally terse and vigorous: 'No compliments—when you have a Jezebel for a mother'. There was no mistake about an answer like that, and Joram knew the fatal fact only too well when he cried, 'There is treachery, O Ahaziah!' And when the arrow of Jehu had sped on its deadly way, and the fallen king fell at once his life and throne, it was as the avenging Spirit of God that Jehu tossed his body into the field which Ahab had bought with Naboth's blood. 'I will requite in this plat, saith the Lord.'

This is a truth of the moral law: our sins revisit us in kind; what we do in youth we rue in manhood—that and nothing else. As grapes do not come of thorns, nor figs of thistles; as the pomegranate seed does not rise into a sycamore, or an ash blossom into an oak; so, when we are sensual in youth, we do not become thieves in manhood, but profligates; if we are selfish in boyhood, we become not vagabonds, but hardened in the afternoon of life. So Ahab's deeds of blood in the vineyard of Jezreel produced in the self-same spot a bloody heritage. There lay Joram wallowing in his blood.

But Jehu's zeal for good did not stop here. He made a clean sweep of evil. 'So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jerusalem, and all his great men, and his kinsfolk, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.'

III. If we could leave Jehu here, it would be well. What a grand sentiment that was which he uttered to Jehonadab, 'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? . . . If it be, then give me thine

hand. . . . Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord!' A man, you will say, that the Lord wanted in that evil time—with strength in his hand and sentiments of righteousness on his tongue. And yet the very man who could do and say such things for God was himself an apostate. It is one thing to make others good, it is another thing to be good one's self. The desire to make others good may be mixed with love of personal power, with a love of completeness in the work we do in the world—an 'ideality' which has no more morality in it than a love of beautiful pictures, or beautiful scenery, or beautiful poetry, a love of all the beautiful sights and sounds of God's universe. Nay, even worse; to desire to see other people good may be a sort of selfishness, because in a settled civilisation it is far more annoying and uncomfortable to have evil persons around one than good. There are some professions in life, you know, which have a tendency to force people to make others good, or to have an outward goodness of their own. It is the basis of all professions in a sense. The soldier learns to love obedience, for he has to enforce it; a lawyer justice, a merchant honesty. But, above all, the clergyman and the teacher acquire a habit of doing good and of being good *externally*, which is often a monotonous habit, and the natural and necessary outcome of our professional life. These things are not worth much. The preacher especially is often so carried away by his own exhortations as to believe himself for the moment to be the sort of man that he beseeches others to be. St. Paul, with his terrific power of analysing character, tears the veil from such subtle self-deceiving, and calls on the man to see himself as with the eyes of God—St. Paul, who called himself 'the chief of sinners'. 'Behold, thou that knowest God's will and approvest the things that are more excellent, and art confident that thou thyself art a guide to the blind, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes. . . . Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God?' I commend these questionings to myself and (may I say among others?) to the prelates here.

But Jehu had no St. Paul to guide him; and so, though he banished Baal, he himself was a castaway. For what saith the Scripture? 'Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from them; to wit, the golden calves that were at Bethel, and that were in Dan.' And so, you see, a man may hate God's enemies and restore God's worship and yet not love God.—H. BRANSTON GRAY, *Men of Like Passions*, p. 159.

#### THE SUNDIAL

'The dial of Ahaz.'—2 KINGS XX. 11.

I WONDER how many of you children have seen a sundial. You have all seen clocks and watches a thou-

sand times, I know; but a sundial is something which we very seldom see nowadays; yet in the good old times it was a very prominent object from which people learnt the time of day. It was not quite so convenient as a watch; you could not put it in your pocket; nor could you very well remove it from one place to another; and when you fixed it you had to be very careful how you did so. They tell us that a knowledge of the highest mathematics was necessary to fix a dial properly. We are told that the finger had to be parallel with the axis of the earth. I am afraid you children won't understand this. All I care to tell you then is, that the finger had to point towards the north, and that, if it failed there, the dial was of little use, because the shadow would not fall aright. There were many other things to be considered in the fixing of the dial; but when once properly fixed it told the time pretty accurately.

But there were other serious drawbacks.

On a dull day the dial was of no use. It required plenty of sun; enough light to cast a shadow. Therefore it could only show the time in the sunshine. It was no help in the dark, or even in the light of a lantern. It is true that even then you could see the marks and numbers on its face, but it could not tell you the time. So that, after all, the sundial was only useful in the place in which it was fixed, and during the bright days.

The Chaldeans were very clever and seemed to be the first to invent the dial for the day, while they used to reckon time at night by observing the movements of the stars. Since then men have invented many kinds of timekeepers, so that there is a vast improvement upon the old-fashioned dial; and yet one is very glad to see it now. Sometimes we see one in the old market-place; at other times on the walls of ancient grammar schools or colleges, where for centuries boys and girls have been trained; and often, too, we may see a dial on an old church tower or on the wall of a churchyard. Sometimes, also, an enterprising man who has built his own house, and who has wanted to keep his own time, has fixed it on the wall of his house; but that to-day is more for ornament than use.

What an anxiety there has been in all ages, on the part of man, to reckon time! In this respect, as in many others, he is unlike every other creature. Man has generally felt, from the earliest days, that time passed away very rapidly. On many a dial were the Latin words, *Tempus fugit* ('Time flies'), and there the shadow moving along the dial reminded everybody that time did fly.

On many dials—for instance, the one which is to be seen in the Temple, London—we read, 'Shadows we are, and like shadows depart'.

Another motto is a Scripture text, 'Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light'. What a sermon that dial preaches to us! The dial in old days, like the clock to-day, was like a conscience to late-comers. When the boys used to go to school, in those good old times, the dial would

look knowingly at them, and if they were late they were sure to know it if the sun shone; or they might guess it by the gloomy aspect of the dial's face if there was no sunshine. Thus many a dial taught the children to be always in time at school.

Again, dials were often found near the places where men were at work, teaching them to be in time. In the market-place, too, where people were buying and selling, there would be a dial, telling them to be busy, for soon the opportunity would be past.

Again, on the church tower there was generally a dial. I wish there was one on our tower; at least, something that would rebuke the people who come in late. In those good old days, when folks had no watches and clocks, they managed to come in time. Now, when people have so many watches and clocks, and not two of them agree, we manage to be often late. I shall have to think seriously about having a dial on our tower if some of the older folks do not come in better time—even you children are not always in time.

Thus you see that the dial has had its uses in teaching people how to make the best of their time; how to be prompt in fulfilling their engagements; never to be behind; and to remember that, after all, life at best is short and like a fleeting shadow, and, therefore, that it behoves us to work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

But there is another thing about the dial which I must mention. It only takes note of the bright hours. Some dials say, 'I only reckon the sunny hours'. Now, there are some of us who never reckon the sunny hours, but only reckon dark and gloomy ones. If you listened to some people from Monday morning to Saturday night—if indeed you could endure such purgatory—they would only talk to you about their trials. They reckon all the thousands of dark hours they have had in their life, but forget all the bright ones. On the other hand, if you listen to other people, they forget their dark hours and only remember the bright ones. I want you children to look at the bright side of life. Thank God for all the good things He has sent you, and especially for giving you such kind parents and teachers, and such loving brothers and sisters.

On the other hand, if one looks at it from another standpoint, the dial is somewhat disappointing as a guide. Anyone we have for a guide should prove invariable. There are plenty of people who can teach us admirably as long as there is sunshine, but who have very little to tell us when trouble comes. Their company is all right while we are perfectly happy and everything goes well. Then they can tell accurately the time of day. But when we get into some big trouble, we want a little guidance; we want to know where we are and how time is going, yet they cannot tell us anything, but only look at us gloomily. We want a guide. And there is One who will never fail us, but will be our Guide in the darkest hour as well as the brightest. He is the Guide whom we all need, and whom I would have you children accept. He will never leave you, and never, never forsake you.—

DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, p. 455.

### GOOD KING JOSIAH

2 KINGS XXII.

CAN you tell me who was the youngest king that ever ruled over the Jews? Think. Can't you tell me? His name was Josiah—*King Josiah*. Can anybody in this church tell me who was the youngest king that ever ruled in England? Edward VI.; he was sometimes called the *Josiah of England!* Josiah was *eight* years old when he began to reign; and Edward VI. was *nine* years old when he began his reign. Only think of a little boy only eight years old *being a king!*

Charles I. had a very dear little daughter. Did you ever hear about her? She was a very little girl—only four years old; and she was very ill in bed, and she was in a great deal of pain. And one day one of her attendants said to the princess, 'You had better say your prayers'. And the little princess said, 'I cannot say my *long* prayer, but I will say my short prayer'. And her short prayer was this: 'Lord, lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death'. I am not quite sure what the little princess meant. Do you think she meant, 'Don't let me go to sleep while I am dying?' or do you think she meant, 'May my *death be only sleep?*' It was a very pretty little prayer. 'Lord, lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.' Then she laid her little head upon the pillow, and she went to sleep, never to wake again in this world. And that young princess was the *first to welcome her dead father* when he went to heaven.

So there was King Josiah, and King Edward VI., and this good little daughter of Charles I.

I don't think that there was ever a better king than Josiah; and I am not sure that we ever had a better king in England than King Edward VI.; so that those who became kings in early life turned out best.

Josiah had a bad grandfather and a bad father. His grandfather's name was Manasseh; his father's name was Amon. Which do you think was the worst man? I will tell you. Both did very wickedly. But God says Amon 'did not humble himself' as his father Manasseh did. Now, we all do wrong; but the difference between us is, some do not humble themselves to God, though they may humble themselves to man; and that is what God looks at. Therefore, Amon was more wicked than his father, because 'he humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh, his father, had humbled himself'.

Be very humble! 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.' And humble yourselves before men. That is what God looks at—to see whether you 'humble yourselves'.

But though Josiah had a bad father he had a very *good mother*. And the reason why I think he had a good mother is this: God here says what a good boy Josiah was, and also mentions his mother's name (Jedidah). You will find all about Josiah in 2 Kings

xxii. and in 2 Chronicles xxxiv., where it says that Josiah 'did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,' 'And his mother's name was Jedidah'. So we put the two together—he was a *good child* and he had a *good mother*. 'O my mother!' 'O my mother!'

When Napoleon Bonaparte was reigning in France they were talking one day about schools—they were to have some new schools—and Bonaparte said, 'Don't tell me about the schools—*mothers are the best schools!* Let us have good mothers—mothers are the best schools!' Don't you think so?

There was a little boy who was very wicked and obliged to be sent to a 'Refuge'. A 'Refuge' is a place where naughty boys are sent. When he saw him the superintendent said, 'Well, my boy, what is your name?' He said, 'John Smith!' The superintendent was quite sure, from his manner and look, he was telling a lie. Did the superintendent say, 'You have told a lie'? No, he did not say that, but he said, 'My lad, have you a mother?' And the boy said, 'Yes, I have; she's a long way off'. 'Do you think your mother knows about the bad things you have been doing?' 'I hope not,' was the reply. 'Do you ever think of your mother?—do you love your mother?' He said: 'When I was a little boy I had a pretty rabbit. My mother loved my rabbit and I loved it. I used to stroke my rabbit, and one day I remember my mother stroked the rabbit too, and, as she stroked it, she said, "Pretty rabbit, pretty rabbit!" and her hand went over my hand as I was holding the rabbit—it was so *soft*. Oh that I could feel that soft hand now! What would I not give to feel it now!'

The superintendent said, 'My boy, what is your name?' 'George Evershed, sir.' That was the truth. The thought of the mother's 'soft hand' made him give up lying, and speak the truth.

Well, 'Josiah was eight years old when he began to be a king'. You are not a 'king,' are you? I am not a king, but, if we are God's dear children, we *shall be kings* some day, because God says so.

Perhaps you have heard the story about the Duke of Hamilton. His eldest son was very ill, and he was lying upon the sofa. Of course, as he was the eldest son, he would have been the duke when his father died; he would have taken his title. His tutor, who was a clergyman, was talking to him, and explaining to him about the stars. Presently he said, 'I am going to where I shall know more about the stars than any of you do'. Then his brother came in, and he talked to him and said, 'Douglas! Douglas! I am going to die; you will be the duke, but *I shall be a king!*' It was quite true, wasn't it? We are not quite kings yet.

Now we'll think a little about King Josiah. He was fifteen years old when he began to seek God, because it says 'he was eight years old when he began to reign,' and that 'in the eighth year of his reign *he began to seek after God!*'

People sometimes make a mistake in thinking that



Josiah was pious when he was 'eight' years old. But it was when he was fifteen. All things do not come at once. For instance, some flowers come out at one period of the year, and some at a later period. It is the same with people. Some are religious at one age, and some at another. I hope you have all begun to seek God.

'He began to seek God.' Now, I think you know, don't you? that before we seek God *He seeks us*. God seeks us, and then we seek God—as when we read, in the first chapter of St. John, that Jesus Christ went out one day and *found* Philip. When Philip gives an account of it afterwards he says, 'I have *found Jesus*'. Which was true—Jesus found Philip or Philip found Jesus? Both were true. But the most true was that Jesus found Philip, and so Philip found Jesus. If you seek to find God you will find He was seeking you first. God is seeking you now. You are His child and He is seeking you. Seek Him, and you will find Him.

There was a little boy, and at prayers his father was reading from the twenty-third chapter of Proverbs. He read, 'My son, give me thine heart'. The little boy did not say anything, but the words struck him very much: 'My son, *give me thine heart*'. He did not think about any other part of the chapter, because he was thinking about 'My son, give me thine heart'.

When he went to bed he was heard to pray, 'O God, make my heart Thine own. *For I give it Thee!* Make it Thy very own—Thy very own!' Did you ever say that to God?—'Lord, make my heart Thine own—Thy very own'. And, do you know? God *did* give him his petition. He became a very pious boy, and that prayer was the first beginning of it all: 'O Lord, make my heart Thy very own'.

So soon as Josiah began to 'seek the Lord,' of course he *loved everything about God*. He loved God's house, and, because it was in a very bad state, he began to repair it, and he spent a great deal of money to repair the temple, the house of God; and he had a wonderful reward.

As they were repairing the temple they came upon 'a book'. They had never seen such a book before. What book do you think it was? It was '*the Bible!*' What a strange thing!—it does not seem that anybody knew anything about the Bible. It seems almost as if that was the only Bible in all the country. But when they found it, they sent it to the High Priest, Hilkiah; he gave it to Shaphan, the Lord Chancellor, as we should call him; and Shaphan brought it to Josiah. And 'he read it before the king'; and when Josiah heard it read, 'he tore his clothes,' that is, 'rent his clothes'. The Jews did that whenever they were sorry. It meant, 'as I tear my clothes, so I deserve that God should tear me away from the Church of God!' He was so sorry for all the wicked things he had done!

Well, then, God looked at Josiah, and saw that 'his heart was tender,' and God was pleased with him. And then Josiah took the Bible, and he went

into the Church, and stood by a pillar; and he had the book read to *all* the people. The great people had to come, and the little people, and the old, and the young; all had to come to hear the reading of the book just found. And all heard the Bible read. And Josiah said, 'We will make a promise that we will all be true to God and serve Him'. Therefore all the people gathered together, and all made a great promise, and entered into a covenant with God that they would serve Him. And God was pleased with them. And then they kept the Passover—such a beautiful Passover. Never had there been known such a Passover before as the one King Josiah kept. That was the way he showed his love to God.

'His heart was tender,' I want you to think a little about that, that Josiah's heart was tender. Do you think your heart is 'tender'? Have you a 'hard' or a 'soft' heart. How shall we get a 'soft heart' like Josiah's? I want you to think a little about a 'soft, tender heart,' a heart which God loves, a heart such as Josiah had.

There was a man who was condemned to be hung, and his heart was 'as *hard* as a stone!' The chaplain at the prison talked to him, and different people talked to him, but he would not answer. He did not seem to feel anything! He was so 'hard' in prison.

But one day there came down a message from the Queen 'that he was reprieved,' 'not to be hung!'

When he was told that he burst into tears! His heart was 'softened'. What softened him? Not the command that he should be hung, but when he was told he was *forgiven*, that made his heart 'soft'.

That was something like David's case. When he had been very naughty and wicked for years, and his heart was very hard, God sent Nathan to him, and he said, 'The Lord hath put away thy sin'. That made his heart so 'soft,' to know that he was forgiven. He then wrote the fifty-first Psalm.

Oh, *do try to have a very 'soft heart'*. It is one of the best things you can have. Remember that God loves you. Think how wonderful it is that 'God loves me!' 'God has really forgiven me!' That will make your heart 'soft'. That will give you a 'tender' conscience. 'Jesus loves me!'

A boy some time ago went in for an examination in arithmetic. He could not do the sums; so he got hold of the master's book. You know the book I mean—where all the answers to the sums are to be found. Well, he got this book, and he saw the answers, and he went and put down the right answer. But he didn't do the sum; he didn't know how. Yet he got the prize. But, poor boy! he was so miserable. Something said to him, '*You are a cheat! You are a thief!* You have taken away the prize from the next boy, who knew better than you. You are a cheat! You are a thief!' He could not sleep or be happy. So he got up and went to the master and told him what he had done. He lost the prize; but he had 'a good conscience,' he had a 'tender

heart, God made him feel unhappy when he had done wrong.

This tender heart came to Josiah from loving the Bible. Do you love it? I want to speak to you about loving the Bible. Do you love it? I think every one would say, 'Yes' to that. But do you reverence your Bible?

You remember about Edward VI.—that Josiah of our England. I think everybody knows that when he was a little boy he saw somebody get the Bible to stand on, not being tall enough to reach something. Edward VI. said, 'You must not stand upon the Bible, it is God's Book'. Reverence it, treat it with respect and honour; love and honour it!

I will tell you about a boy. He went to a shop to buy some soap that his mother sent him for. The woman who sold him the soap took a book and tore a leaf out to put the soap in. It was a Bible. The little boy did not like her to do that, and he said to the woman, 'Why, that's the Bible!' The woman said, 'Well, what of that?' The boy said, 'You must not use the Bible to wrap up soap in; it is God's Book'. 'But I bought it for that very purpose,' she answered, '*it is waste paper!*' 'I wish it were my Bible,' said the boy. 'You may make it your Bible, if you like to pay for it,' the woman answered. 'The boy was very pleased and said, 'Oh, thank you,' and he ran home to his mother and told her all about this wicked woman tearing up the Bible to wrap the soap in, and how she had offered to sell it to him, and he said, 'Give me the money that I may have the Bible'. His mother said, 'I cannot give you the money, I have no money to spare, I am too poor!' So he went back to the woman and said, 'I can't get the money,' and he began to cry. 'I'll tell you what I'll do,' she said, 'if you will bring me the same weight of paper for it, I think I can manage for you to have the Bible!' So he went back home to his mother and she gave him all the spare paper she could; and he went to the neighbours and begged some, and having got as much as he could, he took it to the woman at the shop. 'I must be sure it is all right,' she said, 'before I can let you have the Bible; I must weigh the paper you've brought.' So she put the paper in one scale and the Bible in the other scale. Fancy how the little boy looked when he saw the *paper was the heaviest!* The Bible went up and the paper went down. He took the Bible in his hands and, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'I have got the Bible,' and ran away. *He revered it.* Never see the Bible used in any wrong way if you can help it. Reverence it! Love your Bible!

I have read of a little boy who wanted a Bible very much. Another boy said, 'I have one I wish to sell'. 'Sell it to me,' said the first boy. But he had no money. 'If you give me your dinner for six days you shall have my Bible!' And the little boy did so. That was a fine action. Could you do that? *Would you give up your dinner for six days to get a Bible?* It is a wonderful Book!

I will tell you about a very strange book I once heard of. It was a wonderful book—nothing was printed in it! It was a great comfort to the man who owned it, and was a useful book to the man. But there was nothing printed in it, and it had only three leaves. The first leaf was all *black*—black as your hat; the second leaf was a bright *red*; and the third leaf was all *white*. That book said to him—I cannot tell you what important things, and what a comfort it was. Do you understand it? The first page, all black, is our sins—we are all *black*; the second page, all red, is the blood of Jesus—all red; and the next, all white, what we are when we are washed in the blood of Jesus—all white!

*Black—red—white!* Do you see? There was everything there—black, red, white—that is almost all there is in the Bible.

There was a man and his wife who said they would read the Bible together. They had not been religious. When they had read a little the man said, 'Wife, if this is all true, *we are all wrong*'. 'Yes.' He went reading a little further on, when he said, 'Wife, if this is all true, *we are lost!*' 'Yes.' He went a little further on, and he said, 'Wife, if this is all true, I see a way by which *we can be saved!*' 'Yes.' He went a little further on; he said, 'Wife, if this is all true, *I see the way*—what we are to do to be saved, and what we are to do when we are saved!' That is the Bible! It shows us we have all done wrong, and what will become of us. And it shows us what we are to do to get our pardon, and what to do when we have got it. That is the way to read the Bible. Josiah loved his Bible.

Boys and girls have got strange minds—don't you think so? Have not you very odd minds? Don't they change very much? Don't you find you are very different one day from what you are another? Don't you find you have different feelings now from what you had a few years ago? Which are the best? Were they your best feelings which you had some time ago? or do you think you have your best feelings *now*? I wonder which it is?

I am now going to use a very hard word. I don't suppose any young person in this church has ever heard of the word. I am sure I did not know there was such a word when I was your age. But I will explain it to you now. It is called 'palimpsest'. It is a very hard word—P-a-l-i-m-p-s-e-s-t, *Pulimpsest*.

About a hundred years ago, in the great library of Rome—the library of the Vatican—a monk found a large piece of parchment, and upon it was some writing. Somehow or other he suspected there was something written underneath the writing he could see. So he managed, by some chemical process, to get the first writing off; and, lo and behold, he found under that writing another writing, altogether different. Then he thought he would try the same process again. And he got that writing off, and then he found quite a different kind of writing. Then he tried again, with the same results. At length he found something that he could read. Someone told the

monk it was because it was a *palimpsest*. Dr. Johnson, who was then living, said that he thought, because parchment was so dear they used the same piece over and over again. Such writings were called 'palimpsest manuscripts,' a term used in law.

The reason I mention about the *palimpsest* is because I think there are a great many 'palimpsests' here to-day; many boys and girls with one layer upon another layer! One may be called a layer of

bad; another may be called a layer of good, and then bad again! *Always changing!* Boys and girls never seem the same. I wonder if I were to take the 'layer' off of this 6th day of October, 1878, and show the 'layer' of the 6th day of October, 1877, which would be the worst? I wonder which? You ask yourselves that question. 'Am I better than I was?'—J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children* (5th Series), p. 48.



# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

## ROUGH RUBBING

'Glistening stones.'—1 CHRON. XXIX. 2.

THESE were stones which glanced and gleamed in the sunshine, much as coloured glass would do. You have all seen stones like them—smooth and polished and shiny—and you have wondered much how they came to be made so beautiful. Let me tell you.

**I. Stones are always Polished by their Own Dust.**—The diamond is coarse and dark at first, but after it has been roughly cut and roughly ground it is rubbed and rubbed—oh, for ever so long—on diamond dust, and so it comes to be brighter than glass. And it is in the same way marble and granite, and all manner of pebbles, get to be polished. I have a beautiful bit of porphyry (which is a kind of aristocratic granite) that came all the way from Carthage, where most likely Hannibal saw it, for it was part of a temple there in his time. Napoleon III. sent a block of it for a rare present to our Queen, and the piece I have is a chip of that block, and it has been most beautifully polished, and serves me finely for a paper-weight. (The Queen and I must be very good friends, you perceive, when we share presents between us!) It was while I was speaking the other day to the friends of the man who polished this stone that I learnt something which will interest you; this one, like every polished stone, was made smooth and beautiful by its own dust.

And that is how boys and girls and men and women get their best polish too. It is rubbing does it—rubbing against their old mistakes, their old sins, their old foolishness. You can cipher pretty well now, can't you? Very likely you can do even long division—and do it correctly too! Ay, but do you mind the mistakes you used to make even with simple addition? Oh, you needn't blush to own it now—for it has all come right at last—you got so rubbed and rubbed against these old mistakes, that at last you have come to be quite a polished cipherer. It was the same with your reading, it was the same with your writing, with your geography, your history, your music, and very much more. There was a time when it was all rough work, but now it has come to be quite smooth. And why? because you were bent on becoming better, and so were willing to take the rubs of your old mistakes.

Never, then, be ashamed to admit a mistake, for that shows that you are wiser now than when the mistake was made. They say that 'experience teaches fools'. This is not the case. Experience teaches those who are wise; foolish folk don't learn much from experience; they are not humble enough

to take the rubbing and the drubbing of their old mistakes, and you know, unless we are humble we can never be wise. So never be ashamed to acknowledge when you have made a mistake.

And it is just as important to learn how to make use of our old sins. Ah, if we use them rightly they can be made like the dust of our old selves to polish and make us beautiful in the future. How cowardly Peter was when he denied Jesus! Yes; but afterwards how bold he became in standing up for the Lord, even when people mocked him. You see, he had wetted his old sin with tears of repentance, and had humbly taken all the pain of rubbing against it, and so had got the right polish out of it. The remembrance of his cowardice shamed him afterwards to be always bold to speak for Jesus. That is the right way to use our old sins—make them serve to polish us and make us more beautiful in spirit.

**II. But learn next, The Test of a True Polish.**—For there is a true polish and a false polish, and it is not difficult to mistake the one for the other. When a stone has been ground for a time on its own dust it looks very smooth and nice. But looks are deceitful sometimes, and so the workman dashes some clean water on the smooth surface of the stone. Ah, how much brighter that makes the polish!—ever so much brighter! Yes, and that is just why the workman knows the polishing isn't perfect yet! You are astonished at this, are you not? You would think that the brighter it shone when the water was on it, the more nearly perfect it would be. Yes, but that is just how it isn't; for *if the stone has got the proper polish it should shine just the same whether there is water on it or not.* And this is where a great big lesson comes in. If we are right Christian boys or girls, men or women, we should be able to show that we are—everywhere and always. When you have been out in the country and have come to one of those sweet, pure, baby brooks that run over the brown sand, and chatter, chatter as they go, like as babies always will, oh, how beautiful are all the pebbles there! They are 'glistening stones,' every one of them. And you gather them out and fill your pocket with them, or more likely you take a whole handkerchief full, and you mean to have a museum at home that will be worth looking at. Yes, but somehow, when you do get home, the pebbles don't seem just so bright as they were when the water went over them and the sunshine dived down to them. They are very dull now, and in a few days they get very dim and dark, and at last you begin to notice the fact that the pebbles aren't polished after all! They were bright—very bright—so long as the

water was on them, but the fact is the brightness was in the water and not on the pebbles.

And just so there are people who are very good in some places who are very bad in others. They may be very good in church—quite polished stones there—but the same people may be very bad at home or at business—and that shows they haven't the right polish in themselves. You may be very good at school so long as the master has his eye on you, but as soon as his eye is turned away maybe you copy from the next one's slate. That shows you are only sly and cheatful—you haven't the right polish for a true boy or a true girl.

This is what God wants to polish us for—that we may shine before Him glorious for ever. These

'glistening stones' the text speaks about were to be set in the temple of God when they had been prepared enough. And God wants to set us in His temple above for ever. Ah, we can't deceive Him! If we aren't real—Christ's boys and Christ's girls, Christ's men and Christ's women from the heart—we can never be set in the temple above. Live for this, and so live for Jesus Christ; and as you strive every day and in every way to do this by prayer and trust, He will guide you, He will shape you, He will polish you—even your tears will help the work—till you become 'lively,' living stones, to shine before the Lord in His temple for ever and ever.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pulpit*, p. 77.

# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

## A BRIGHT SUNRISE AND A GLOOMY SUNSET

'Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.'—  
2 CHRONICLES XXIV. 1.

I AM going to speak to you to-day about Joash, one of the Kings of Judah. He ascended the throne when he was only the age of some of you I now address—seven years old. 'What a happy little boy!' you may say. Stop a little. Do not envy the great. They are not always the happiest. They have often to face terrible temptations and dangers others are well free from. It is a dizzy height a throne. Do you remember, I told you, when speaking some Sundays ago about Jabez, to seek rather to be good than to be great? Better have God's love and blessing than a crown of gold upon your head. In that same sermon I even said to you to try rather to be good than to be learned. I was struck in reading the life of an honoured minister of Christ with what he wrote to his son at college: 'I had rather,' he says, 'you had the three prizes of Faith, Hope, and Love, than all the prizes that all the universities of the whole world can confer'.

There is one thing Joash was to be envied in. When he was a little child he had a pious and devoted uncle and aunt. He was left an orphan. He had escaped from a cruel death when all his brothers were slain. But this Jehoiada and his wife had stolen him secretly, and hid him in one of the chambers of the Temple. For six whole years they kept him there in safety, and were very kind to him. We can think of them as they sat by his little couch and smoothed his pillow, and dried the tears of the lonely boy, and did what they could to cheer his early years. What was better, they taught his young heart to fear the great and good God of Israel.

It must have been a dreadful thought to little Joash, if he knew the whole truth, that he was the only one of all the royal family that was spared. Every one of the others, as I have just said, had been cruelly murdered—some by their own father, others by their wicked grandmother, others by order of Jehu. But when the boy came to be seven years of age his uncle Jehoiada, who was also the High Priest, brought him one day into the Temple to proclaim him king. That uncle managed to conceal a large force of Levites and others in one of the courts of the house. It so happened that King David had, long ago, stored the shields and spears which he had taken in his wars in the treasury of the Temple. So Jehoiada seized them and gave them to the unarmed men. And then he brought out young Joash, to be anointed and crowned as monarch. The latter

stood on a 'pillar' (or as that rather means, a throne on the top of a cluster of pillars); and the cry was heard amid shouts and music, 'God save the King!'

I like the part of that coronation scene, when his uncle Jehoiada made him a present. What do you think that present was? Was it a jewelled sceptre? or a golden crown? or a royal bracelet? No. It was a copy of the Sacred Scriptures, 'the Law of God'. It reminds me of what our own good Prince Albert did not long before his own death. He got a sculptor to carve in white marble a statue of the pious King of England, Edward VI., who died, as you know, when he was a youth. The statue is represented with a sceptre pointing to or resting on the Bible, and if you went close to it you would find the inscription carved beneath (it is taken from the Bible history of young King Josiah in 2 Chronicles xxxiv. 1-3): 'While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father'. Our lamented Prince seems to have had in his mind the possibility of his own early departure; and he thought he would like to make this beautiful present to his children and his children's children, so that when his own lips were sealed and silent, though dead he might yet speak to them. By that marble sceptre pointing to the Bible he would tell not only his own, but the children of all Britain, what in his eyes would make them happiest; make them at once truly great and truly good.

Jehoiada, the High Priest of Israel, at the time of which we have been speaking, seems to have had the same love and reverence for God's holy law. I think, too, that Joash himself, while he was young and his heart was yet tender, loved that law. Indeed we know that he continued a righteous king all the time he was in the charge of his uncle. One of the most interesting things for you to remember about his reign is, that aided by Jehoiada he set up the first 'missionary box' we read of in the Temple of Jerusalem! I shall give you the description in the very words of the Bible: 'And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the Lord' (2 Chron. xxiv. 8). 'But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord' (2 Kings xii. 9).

Well might Joash love the Temple and wish to put it in order, for he owed his life to it. I dare say he would delight every now and then to visit the little chamber in it where he spent his early years. And when he looked around and thought of God's great



goodness and mercy in saving him from a cruel death, he would say to himself, 'I should like to do something for this great God who was so kind to me; who spared my young life, and who has watched over me since then. I shall show my gratitude by trying to build and repair His holy house.'

And he took this plan to do it. It is pleasant to think when you are collecting money for the heathen in your missionary boxes that it was a young King of Judah who set up the first one of these in the Temple on Mount Zion 2700 years ago! Joash continued to give great promise of piety. He destroyed the altars of Baal, and wished his people to serve and worship the true God alone. He seemed to be happy, and for the long period of twenty-three years his kingdom was prosperous.

I wish I could stop here. I wish I could tell you that Joash's reign now ended or that he died a godly monarch, and that, as a godly king, he was gathered to his fathers. But I grieve to say that after good Jehoiada's death Joash became wicked. He fell into the hands of wicked advisers and evil men; restored the worship of Baal; and forgot the Lord God of Israel and all the good counsel that his uncle and aunt had given him.

Ah, sad it is for boys or girls when away from their parents' eyes, or when their fathers and mothers and godly friends have been laid in the grave, to set aside their wholesome words and advices and follow that of evil companions instead. Joash was specially guilty of one most wicked and ungrateful deed. His cousin Zechariah, now the High Priest, was the son of that old and best friend. What did he do to him? When Zechariah told him that he should not serve false gods or build altars to Baal, Joash got the people to stone the High Priest to death; in that very court of the Lord's house, too, where Zechariah's father had kept him safe so long. Jesus Himself, you may remember, speaks of this cruel story (Matt. xxiii. 35). It is very wrong, in any circumstances to be unkind, but it is worst of all to be unkind to those who have been kind to us and who have a claim on our love and gratitude.

When Joash's poor cousin was thus being beaten by his murderers the dying man said, 'The Lord look upon it and require it.'

The Lord *did* look upon it; the Lord *did* require it. The voice of that blood rose from the earth; and God again, in the case of the wicked king, showed how true the words are, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.'

Hazael, the great Syrian captain, came down from the far north with his armies. He besieged Jerusalem and took all the treasures of gold and silver from the Temple.

And what became of the wretched Joash? He had no one to be kind to him or to feel for him now. He was in the tower of Millo, tossing on a bed of sore pain and disease, probably from a wound he had received in battle. He was unable to rise, and his own servants were so displeased at him for the cruel

murder of his cousin that they slew him as he lay helpless on his couch. They refused, too, to bury him in the royal sepulchre. He died unpitied, unloved, without a friend and without a tear!

How sad to give promise in early life of doing so well and to perish wicked and unmourning.

He was forty-seven years old when he died. Better had it been if he had died at seven. Better if he had had a little tomb in the royal vaults with the inscription over his early death, 'All Israel mourned for him!' than at the age of forty-seven to have a forgotten grave somewhere in the city of David, with the inscription on it, 'Here lies the Ungrateful King!' It is better to die young in God's service than to live to be old and go over to Satan's service. This should comfort any of you who may have lost some brother or sister when these were very young. Who knows but they may have been 'taken away from the evil to come!' 'Better David's dead little child than his living Absalom.' If I had been Joash's father (or his uncle, who loved him as a father), I would rather have carried him to his grave at seven than seen him live only to do evil and bring down grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

How different his death and his grave to that of his uncle! The story of the latter is touching in its shortness, simplicity, and beauty: 'And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house' (2 Chron. xxiv. 16).

Seek so to live that when you come to die, though you may be laid in no kingly sepulchre, people may gather round your grave and say of you, as of good Jehoiada, 'He had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house'; or like some children I lately read of who, as they stood with their eyes full of tears round the resting-place of their little brother, were heard saying, 'Oh, how good he was! We want to be like him!' That little brother of theirs had not lived in vain. Though dead they felt he was in one sense still living among them by his holy example. After the sky-rocket, the favourite of your fireworks, shoots high up in the dark night, you have seen a shower of red sparks falling down to the earth. That rocket reminds one of bright memories which such a beautiful young life leaves behind it. He being dead yet shines, 'He being dead yet speaketh'.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 237.

### 'A PATCH'

2 CHRONICLES XXIV. 12.

THERE is an old saying, 'A stitch in time saves a patch' (a revised version). Some boys and girls put on a fine pout if called upon to wear patched clothes. There is no discredit in wearing patched clothes if they are neat and clean. Do not heed what thoughtless folk may say. No one can go through life without patching. A man makes a business blunder and he must rectify it. A girl has offended her girl friend—she must make an honourable apology to heal the

breach. In our school sports we get a cut or a bruise—that must be healed with a patch.

Now let us take the word to pieces and see what is in it.

**A Patch of Pity** as seen in a piece of medical plaster. The baby over-reached himself and fell out of his chair and cut his head. The doctor came and sewed up the cut and put some pieces of plaster on his head.

He is now quite a pretty baby and well *patched*.

**Art.**—Patches on the face. It was an old custom to cover little pimples with small round pieces of silk. Perhaps you have seen quaint pictures of men and women decorated in this way. I have read of an artist who once covered an ugly scar on the face of a great soldier by representing him as standing with his head resting on his hand, his finger covering the scar.

**Tenderness.**—When the Prodigal Son of Luke xv. returned, bruised and broken, his father ran out to meet him and greeted him with a kiss.

Often a silent handshake will draw life's ragged edges together and heal a rent.

**Comfort.**—I cannot illustrate this point better than by relating the following incident: The members of a children's sewing club made a patchwork quilt and gave it to a needy, lonely old man. In the centre the text 'God is Love' was worked in crimson letters. This silent message was the means which finally led to the conversion of the old man.

**Honour.**—It is related how that when James Garfield was a student in college he wore patched clothes, at which some of his fellows sneered and called him *Patches*.

In spite of his patches the day came when he sat in the president's chair at the White House, Washington, the pride of his mother and a nation.

I close with a little ditty:—

Plod, pray, and peg away,  
Patches win a golden day.

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 20.

### THE BOY-KING

'Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.'—2 CHRONICLES XXXIV. 1, 2.

The life of the good King Josiah is written in the chapter from which the text is taken and the one which next follows. It is a very interesting biography indeed. You will find another account of it in the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of the Second Book of Kings. You should read both. In the record of this pious king's history, as it is found in the place referred to in Kings, there are two things which are worthy of special remark. The first is this: A long time before he was born there was a prophecy about him by his name, to the effect that he would destroy the altar built to idol-calves in Bethel by wicked Jeroboam. Now this prophecy

was exactly fulfilled in Josiah's lifetime. The following is the account of its accomplishment as given by the sacred historian: 'Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove'. The other thing very deserving of notice is this: The Spirit of God writes a very wonderful eulogy on him. He tells us that like unto Josiah 'was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him'. Judah had been privileged to have many good kings before; but none had shown zeal and energy and lovely humility like his. Now this king came to the throne while he was yet a mere child; and it is this circumstance which I intend to give as the key-note to our meditation in this sermon. I have therefore announced the subject of it as 'the boy-king'.

Let me call your attention:—

**I. To Josiah's Early Piety.**—We are told that 'while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father'. This was in the eighth year of his reign, when he was between fifteen and sixteen years old. You will say there are very many children who seek and find the Saviour younger than that. True, but I think the meaning of the words I have quoted is not that then for the first time he sought the Lord secretly. Public conduct seems to be referred to; consulting the prophets for direction; worshipping God in the Temple, and in such a way as to say to all the people he had set out in the spirit and the course of his great father David. This open seeking of the God of Israel was coming out to be on the Lord's side, declaring against idols and the evils that ensnared others of Judah's kings who had preceded him. It was forsaking the errors of Amon his father, and approving of Manasseh's last days, not his first. It was like joining a church among us; like making a visible profession of following Christ by going to His table. And having made this comparison, let me add that surely all children of godly parents ought to be found, at latest, giving themselves to Christ and to His Church about the age mentioned in Josiah's case. I do not say how much sooner it would be fitting for them to seek a place at the Lord's table, but surely fifteen cannot be too juvenile an age. Whatever your age, have you begun to give any evidence that you are seeking the God of your fathers? Do you remember that text in the Psalms, 'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek?' Have you heard God so speak to you? Have you answered Him so?

**II. Josiah's Early Usefulness.**—You have often heard of the Reformers. You are familiar with the names of Luther and Calvin and Knox. Now Josiah was, in his day, a reformer. He delivered Judah from idol-worship, and brought back the service of the true

God. He began his great work when he was only twenty years of age. He found Jerusalem and all the land in a very bad state. There were altars to false gods everywhere, and the Temple of the God of Israel was fallen into disrepair and decay. The ordinances of religion, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the rites of cleansing, were all neglected. There was not much to distinguish Judah from a heathen country. Finding things in this condition, Josiah with great energy set himself to promote a revival of true religion. He did three great works. He removed the idols; he repaired the Temple; he restored the worship of God.

#### I. He removed the idols.

He did this very thoroughly and widely and perseveringly. Let us go with him in our thoughts down into the valley of Hinnom and see how he acted. In that valley there was a place for the worship of Moloch, with, probably, an image of the idol. If it was like his image elsewhere it was very hideous, for it is said to have been made of brass, with a head like a calf, wearing a crown, and having its arms extended to receive the poor children that were made to pass through the fire to it. For this horrid purpose the arms were made red-hot, and the cries of the child, when placed on them, were drowned with the noise of drums and other loud instruments. The poet Milton speaks of Moloch, and calls him—

Horrid king, besmeared with blood  
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears;  
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
Their children's cries unheard, that passed through fire  
To his grim idol.

No wonder that good Josiah determined to put an end to dreadful rites like these. So he destroyed everything used in the worship of Moloch, and defiled the place, burning dead men's bones there in all likelihood, as he did elsewhere, and making it a place for receiving all kinds of offscourings and filth.

II. Besides destroying altars and idols and cleansing the house of God from the images and vessels sacred to Baal, Josiah repaired the house of God.

He did not merely work a reformation in the way of removing the evil, like Jehu. He was as earnest to build the Temple of the true God as to overthrow the high places where the false deities were worshipped. So he gave money to restore the sacred edifice. He appealed to the priests and Levites and roused them into zeal. He infused his own spirit into them. So carpenters and masons were employed, and stones and timber were purchased, and the building was thoroughly repaired. While this was being done a remarkable thing happened. It would appear that King Josiah all the time he was seeking the Lord and warring against idols had not a copy of the Bible of his day. For as they were clearing away ruins from the Temple the sacred volume, the book of the law, was found. And when Josiah read it and found how utterly its commandments had been neglected and what punishments were threatened in it, he rent his clothes and trembled and sent to a prophetess to

ask the Lord about it, praying for mercy. Then having received a comforting message, and the Temple being now repaired, he set himself to bring Israel to observe the law.

III. This was the third thing he did, he restored God's worship.

He took the Word of God as his rule to go by. The consequence was that he influenced a great many others, and there was a general revival of the service of God in the land. Amongst other things there was held a wonderful Passover. There had not been a Passover like it for hundreds of years. There is a minute account of it in the chapter following this of my text. Josiah made great donations of cattle towards it. The nobles followed his example. All persons that were to officiate were in their places; priests, Levites, singers, porters, and people. What a scene Jerusalem must have presented during the the paschal week, and oh, how happy must the king have been to see it!

Now I must tell you of four noble qualities that Josiah showed in all this, and ask you to think about them and imitate them.

1. He showed a tender heart.
2. He showed a docile mind.
3. He showed an open hand.
4. He showed a fervent spirit.

**III. Josiah's Early Death.**—The manner of Josiah's death was strange. He was left to act very foolishly. He did not ask counsel of God, and would go to battle with the King of Egypt, who had no quarrel with him. In the battle the archers shot at and wounded him. He got back to Jerusalem only to die. But his death, though untimely and in war, was for him happy. How he was esteemed was shown at his death. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, led in their lamentations by Jeremiah the prophet. There is a circumstance which shows how true a sorrow this was, and how great. In Zechariah's prophecies, when he is predicting the grief of the Jewish people when they shall wake to a sense of their sin in crucifying the Lord of glory, he compares their mourning to this for Josiah in the valley of Megiddon, and describes its bitterness as that of a father mourning for the loss of his first-born son. Ah, well might Judah mourn her noble and lovely prince! If anything could have averted God's wrath it would have been a life like his. But now that he is gone the end hastens apace.

Now, to close, here is a beautiful example for you to copy. Do not say Josiah was a king and we cannot imitate him. For though not to do his work, you may drink in his spirit. Think of those four noble qualities I named, and be like him in these. Be tender of heart, docile of mind, liberal of hand, and fervent of spirit. Two things his life says to the young: Be pious children; remember your Creator in the days of your youth; Be useful children; do some good while you live. Then, even if you should die young, you will die beloved and grieved for by the good on earth; while God Himself will take you



to heaven and give you joy and glory there.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 628.

### JOSIAH'S EARLY PIETY

'For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.'—2 CHRONICLES XXXIV. 3.

God has told us something about Josiah when he was young. He has been pleased to tell us exactly how old he was. It is pleasant to know this when we read a story. God has told us this about Josiah. It is a very important age from eight to eighteen. Most of you in this church are about that age. That is exactly the time when God gives us an account about Josiah. He began to reign when he was eight years old, and after he was eighteen he reigned twenty years longer. I am not going to speak to-day about anything that happened after he was eighteen; but only of that which took place from the time he was eight years old to the time he was eighteen.

Josiah, I am sorry to say, had not a good father. His father's name was Amon. I should think when Josiah was a very little boy everybody loved him; for, when his father died, the people took him and made him their king.

But though he had not a good father, I think he had a good mother. Her name was Jedidah, which means 'Beloved of the Lord'. It is the same name that Solomon had—one of his names.

However, it does not prove she was a good woman because she had a good name; but I have another reason. Did it ever strike you when reading the Kings and the Chronicles how often it says, when speaking of different men becoming kings, 'So-and-so became king, and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and his mother's name was So-and-so'; and in other places, 'So-and-so began to reign, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and his mother's name was So-and-so'. It often reads like that; as if the fact of a king being a good king or a bad king depended chiefly on who his mother was.

No doubt we all owe a great deal to our dear fathers and mothers. We shall never know till we get to heaven how much we owe to them. I dare say if we reach heaven, and if there we talk about these things and ask one another, 'How did you get to heaven?' a great many will say, 'Oh! it was my mother; it was my father; I owe everything to them. It was that dear, wise, faithful father I had, who used to talk to me so kindly when I was little; it was that sweet, kind mother, who used to take me on her knees, and read the Bible to me.'

Honour your mothers. Especially boys, treat your mothers with great respect. Never tittle with your mother; never be rude to your mother.

I dare say you have read about John Newton—he had a good mother. When he was a young man he was very wild and wicked; afterwards he was converted and became a true Christian and a very great one. He used to say, 'Even when I was very wild

I could never forget my mother's soft hand. When going to do something wicked I could always feel her soft hand on my head. If thousands of miles away from her I could not forget that.' Never forget your mother's soft hand!

So Jedidah (who, I think, was a pious woman) was the mother of King Josiah. He was just eight years old when his father died and he was called to the throne. What a little boy to be king! Do you expect to hear that he began immediately to do great things? No, I do not, for God would not have wished him to do what the world calls great things. But I will tell you what he did. I think he had some wise people about him to help him and guide him. There was Shaphan the scribe, and Hilkiah the High Priest, and some others, who were his chief friends, but particularly Shaphan.

Well now, from the time that he was eight years of age to the time he was eighteen, shall I tell you what he did? Josiah kept in a straight path. He did not turn to the right; he did not turn to the left; but kept a straightforward course. I will read the text where it says so, 2 Kings xxii. 2: 'And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left'. He pursued a straightforward course. Of course he had lessons to learn; he saw people; and he went about; but still he 'turned not aside to the right hand or to the left'.

Now, that is exactly what you are to do. You are to keep a straight course and not turn aside. I shall speak to you a little about keeping this straightforward course now, though you may be very young. You have to give yourselves to learning, in order that by and by you may be useful; you have to serve God and keep His commandments—to love Him, and become a Christian: this is your straight course. If anybody wants you to go aside, to do something that is wrong—to turn to the right or to the left—you must be able to say, 'No'. You are to keep a straight course. This is what I want to talk to you a little about.

How very straight sometimes are the furrows that you see in a ploughed field. How does the ploughman manage to plough so straight? One day I asked him, and he said, 'I always keep my eyes fixed upon a mark in the wall or hedge at the end of the field; when I do that I plough straight; but if I look at the plough or take my eye off the mark I do not go straight'.

If ever you try to walk along a narrow plank, across a dangerous place, the best way is to keep your eye on something at the other end—not to look down at your feet, or you will fall.

How does a ship manage to go so straight in the sea, where there are tides to throw it out of its course? Why, the man at the wheel or rudder holds it quite firm, and so the ship goes straight. Do you see what I mean?

Now there are three things I think which make a

straight course. The first thing is this, a boy or girl who wishes to follow a straight path, the path of duty, must be an honest, upright, and a truthful child—never swerve from the truth; but keep to the truth honestly and exactly. I do not know any sin which is so bad, as for you not to be quite true, quite honest—because then you are so unlike Jesus Christ, who is ‘The Truth’. I have a good hope of a boy or girl who speaks the truth; but if children begin to depart from the truth, alas! for them. Nothing is so bad as for a boy or girl not to speak the truth. Avoid the least shade of lying—the least shade of prevarication. Be quite honest about little things. Never take things not your own. Never take advantage. Never try to deceive. Take a straight course.

I had the pleasure of knowing a gentleman who told me of a little circumstance I should like to relate to you. I will not mention his name, but he is a very rich gentleman indeed; he brings into this country all the guano that comes into England from South America. He is a merchant in London, and he makes a good use of his money—he builds churches and schools, and is exceedingly kind to charities. He was not always so rich, but he has been a very upright, honest man of business, and God has blessed him, and I am almost afraid to tell you how much he is worth, it is of no use my telling you; but I will tell you what he said: ‘I trust I have ever tried in my life to be honest; and what first made me think of being very honest was this: when a little boy, my mother went out shopping, and took me with her. She went to a wool shop and she bought some wool, and I picked up a little bit, a scrap of wool lying on the floor—I did not mean any harm—and when I went away, I took it away with me. My mother asked me where I obtained it. I said, “Mamma, I picked it up from the shop floor”. She said, “Is it not yours?” I said, “It is only a scrap”. She said, “It is not yours. You must go back with me to the shop, and ask the shopkeeper’s forgiveness, because it is taking away that which is not your own!” Now,’ said the gentleman, ‘that little bit of wool I have thought of all through my life, both when I was a young man of business, and now I am an old man. It taught me a lesson about honesty in little things that I never forgot. It kept me good all my life.’

Remember, if it is only a little scrap of wool off the floor, if it is not yours, you cannot take it without quitting the straight course. Do not turn aside to the right or to the left; be like Josiah.

Now, another thing. There must be something to send you along a straight course—you would not go without—like the arrow which lies on the ground; but if you take a good bow, and shoot off the arrow, it will go straight. We must try to have a good bow, something that will send us straight. What will do this? I only know of one thing—that is, the love of God. If you have the love of God in your heart you will always go straight. Some people will tell you of other reasons. They say, ‘Be honourable,

because you will get into disgrace if you are not’. I do not think much of that. There must be the love of God in your hearts; if you have not that you will begin to be dishonest and a hypocrite. But if the love of God is in your heart it will take you straight.

There was an excellent old clergyman many years ago, who was lying on his sick-bed, and many wished to go and see him, and the doctor said he must not see anyone. But a little boy, whose name was David, peeped in at the door, and he saw him; and the clergyman said, ‘David, come to my bedside. Do you see that door in that little room? If you were to go in there the walls would tell you, if they could speak, how often I have knelt down in that little room and given my heart to Jesus Christ. I have done it over and over again. I was so happy when I could do that. Oh, David,’ said the dying clergyman, ‘have you ever done it? Have you ever given your heart to God?’ These words took such an effect upon little David that he went home and knelt down in his bedroom and gave his heart to God there and then; and that little boy became a clergyman and lived fifty years afterwards. He ascribed all to that. He began, you see, by giving his heart to God—the love of God impelled him.

But I must state one more thing. The ploughman ploughs right because he looks at something before him. Have an object in life. What are you living for? A far object? Something far off? Have you an object in eternity? Are you living for eternity?

I have read of a very little boy, and they called him ‘Robby’; he died when he was quite young, and he used to go about always saying, ‘Come, come! Come, children! Come, papa! Come, mamma! Come, brothers!’ ‘Where, Robby?’ ‘To heaven; come to heaven.’ And when he was lying upon a sick-bed, from which he never recovered, to everybody that came into his room he said, ‘come! come! come!’ ‘Where?’ ‘To heaven.’ He was living for an object. He was trying to get everybody to heaven—trying to do good. He had something worth living for. And yet that little boy was only three or four years old. We ought always to be doing good, saying, ‘Come! Come!’ ‘Where?’ ‘To heaven to be sure!’

You remember my three rules for a straight course: one is, to be perfectly honest and true; I have no hope of you if you be not perfectly honest and true; the second is, have the love of God in your heart to send you on; and thirdly, have an object to live for.

Now I must go on to another thing in Josiah. You will not be surprised to hear that Josiah went on this straight course and loved the church of God. Now the church wanted repairing; and one of the first things he did when old enough, I suppose, to rule (for Shaphan, the protector, had ruled for him) when he took the reins in his own hands, he undertook the repairing of God’s Temple; and he was so honest that I suppose it made all his people honest: for when he sent to repair it he put a great deal of money into

the hands of the carpenters, the builders, and the masons, and never reckoned with them at all. See what good example can do! It seems to me that he had such an influence that all the people became so honest that he needed not to reckon money with them.

A remarkable thing happened while the repairing of the Temple was taking place: and strange things often take place when we least expect them. And what do you think it was? Why, they found a Bible—it seems to have been the only Bible in the land—a copy of the Pentateuch. God had said it should be kept near the ark. Well, they found this copy of the law; and Josiah had never seen a Bible before, and he was very much surprised at it; for Hilkiah the High Priest gave the book to Shaphan, and he brought it to the king: he was much pleased also, and he said to Shaphan, 'You read'; and he began to read—some think he read the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy; whatever passage it was, it touched Josiah's heart so that it made him cry—he shed a great many tears—for there were so many beautiful things in the book; and he was very much hurt when he heard of the people still worshipping idols; he had not known it before, but when this began to be read, he was so humbled and softened, for he had a soft and tender heart, when he was only about sixteen.

I know some boys who, when they are about twelve or fourteen, think it is manly not to show any feeling; and they will laugh at the boy who would cry when he heard anything very touching. God thinks differently. I do not know anything so important as to keep a tender heart. Mind what I say about that. The world too soon makes us hard-hearted. Do everything you can to keep your heart soft. Look at 2 Kings xxii. 19: 'Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord'.

Now let us speak a little about 'a soft and tender heart'. Is your heart soft and tender? Sometimes you are miserable when you do something wrong: and after you have done it several times, you begin to do it and not care much about it—till by and by you do it without any feeling.

The first thing which shows a tender heart is when we feel little sins very much. David felt that. You recollect that once or twice he could have killed Saul, but he did not; he only took away his spear and a cruise of water, and on another occasion he cut off the skirt of his robe. Saul was his enemy. Was he wrong in so doing? Yes, for he was the king. David felt this, and his 'heart smote him'. You know it is said he prayed to God to make his heart like melting wax; he tried to keep it like a little weaned child—like wax.

One great thing towards having a tender heart is to feel quickly when you have done wrong. I will tell

you how it is. I wonder whether any of you ever had in your bedroom an alarm clock to wake you. You fix it at a certain hour and when that hour arrives, it makes a whirring noise which wakes you. As soon as it strikes you generally wake. But suppose you do not; and the next day, and the next two or three days this happens—why, the alarm will sound, but it will not wake you.

You have an alarm in you. Do you know what the alarm is? Your conscience. It speaks to you, tells you when you do wrong. If you listen to the alarm, then it will be very useful to you; but if, when the alarm within you (your conscience) speaks, you do not attend, then you will be able to sleep through it. It will go, but go for nothing. You will be able to go on just as you like, not minding the alarm. Attend to your alarm clock. Keep a tender heart. Always consider your conscience.

There is a beautiful little Persian fable of a man who picked up a scented piece of clay, and he looked at it, and said to it, 'Who are you? are you musk?' And the thing in his hand answered, 'I am a poor bit of clay, but I have been near a rose, and the rose has given me its own sweet smell'. Do you understand it? We are all poor bits of clay. If we keep near 'The Rose,' we shall all be sweet bits of clay! and then everybody will know we have been near 'The Rose'.

Now I will mention one more thing which will show a tender heart. It is to be very kind to one another. Oh, be kind. I hope you can never bear to see a poor animal in pain—never look at it. If you can help it, do; but do not feel pleasure in seeing it. Never put anyone's body or mind in pain, especially little children's. Big boys in school, be kind to the little ones. Elder girls, be kind, tender, and gentle to the little ones.

I should like to tell you about a boy whose name was Caleb; he lived at a place called Maresfield. He was a cripple, he went on crutches; he had a hump on his back; but he was a very kind boy. All the boys used to laugh at him, or walk just like him, and call him 'Hunchback,' and say, 'Now I am just like Hunchback'. Some would knock his crutches from under him. They were so unkind to him; but he was very kind to them. He would mend their kites, tell them stories, and be a friend to them in trouble. So he lived down their ridicule.

One boy, Frederic, who was the worst of all his tormentors, was one day climbing up a steep place and fell and broke his leg; and he was obliged to lie in bed for weeks; and who do you think was his greatest friend? Why Caleb; and Frederic said to him, 'The noise of your crutches is music to me as you come upstairs; you never reproach me; you have always something kind to say to me'.

One day Caleb said, 'Cheer up, my friend, I have seen a boy run about as well as ever, who broke his leg; he was ill for weeks, but now he does not feel it. You will be like him soon. I have brought you some pears,' and he pulled out of his pocket some



nice, ripe, delicious pears. Frederic turned aside. At last he said, 'Caleb, I cannot stand this any longer. I used to tease you and throw stones at you; and now, in my trouble, you are my best friend, and tell me such pleasant things and give me such nice pears. How is it?' Caleb said, 'Well, suppose you did throw stones at me, you never broke my bones; and if you did laugh at me, you never hurt me; Christ says we must forgive, for He has forgiven us'. 'Oh, Caleb,' said he, 'how can you do this?' Caleb said, 'It is only as God helps me, that I can do it. I pray to God, and that makes all the difference.' Frederic said, 'I will begin to do the same'. And he lived to recover, and was able to walk again; but he never after teased Caleb, but they lived as Christians together.

Isaiah says Jesus Christ was 'a tender plant'. If you are 'a tender plant,' you are like Him. David says we are to be like 'the tender grass'. What makes 'tender grass'? The dew of the morning and evening. If you want a tender heart, take care you have the dew of the morning and evening. The Holy Spirit is the dew. Take care you have the Holy Spirit coming continually to keep your heart tender. 'Lord give me Thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may be always soft.'

Now I shall mention one more thing of Josiah, that is, how much he loved the Bible, for, as soon as he found it, he read it again and again, and seemed to love it exceedingly. It is remarkable that many of those we read of, who were afterwards great men, loved the Bible when they were boys.

Edward VI. of England was our Josiah. He loved the Bible, for when he saw a person once standing on the Bible he reproved him, and put it on a shelf and said, 'Respect the Bible'. We should respect the book. Some boys do not care about their Bibles. It is very sad when they get them dirty and dog-eared, it displeases God. Respect even the book, even the leaves, even the binding. Take care of your Bibles.

A poor prisoner, kept close in a deep, dark prison, was allowed once in twenty-four hours, for a quarter of an hour, a light, when the turnkey brought his dinner. And did he eat his dinner? No; he said, 'I can eat

my dinner in the dark—I can find my way to my mouth—I will read my Bible'.

A little boy was once travelling in a railway carriage; his mother and a gentleman were in the carriage. The gentleman asked the little boy to sit on his knee, and showed him his watch and talked to him very kindly. The little boy became quite fond of the gentleman. Presently the gentleman took up the newspaper and began to read; and then he talked about politics; and, I am sorry to say, he talked against good things—he talked very foolishly; and the little boy slipped off his knee and went across to his mother, who was on the other side of the carriage. The gentleman was much surprised to see him go and called him back. He did not like his going, and he said, 'My little fellow, why did you leave me? Did you quarrel with me?' His mother said, 'Tell the gentleman why it is you have left him'. He said, 'Sir, I do not like to sit in the seat of the scornful'.

His mother was afraid that the gentleman would get into a great passion—he did colour very much—but he was not very angry; he said to the little boy, 'Do you call me a scornor?' 'Yes, sir; you scorn and you swear.' The gentleman said, 'Well, my boy, if you will come on my knee, I will neither scorn any more nor swear any more. Come and explain to me why you said that.' The boy answered, 'My mamma always reads the Bible to me; this morning she read the first Psalm, where it says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." So you see this little boy loved his Bible and applied it to daily life.

These are three things we find in Josiah from the time he was eight to the time he was eighteen years of age; he kept a straight, even course (that is to say, he was an honest boy, he acted out the love of God, and he lived for an object); he had a soft, tender heart; and he loved his Bible dearly. Do you do the same? That is a basis for life. If you build upon that basis you will build on something that will never totter down—you will build up a happy life, and you will build up a glorious eternity.

—JAMES VAUGHAN.

# EZRA

## A PIN

'Give us a pin.'—EZRA IX. 8.

THE word pin only occurs in the Bible about three times, and in each reference it appears to indicate a means of fastening. Of course the pin mentioned in the Bible would not be quite the same kind of article as a common pin of to-day. It would be difficult to mention a more simple or ready means of fastening than a slim, shiny, sharp-pointed pin. As I look upon the pin before me, it makes a pointed appeal.

I. **A Pin is Bright.**—Bright as a new pin is an old expression. When a child is clever it is often spoken of as being bright.

It is recorded of the child Jesus that He grew in wisdom. He is a bright example. Bright girls and boys are wanted to-day.

II. **A Pin is Sharp.**—Boys and girls be sharp, there are plenty of slow folks in the world.

Take as your motto: 'Diligent in business serving the Lord'.

III. **A Pin is Straight.**—A crooked pin is of but little use. Boys and girls, would you learn the secret of being straight? then listen to the words of the wise man in Proverbs III: 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths'.

IV. **A Pin has a Head.**—Sometimes people say of some one who has made a success of life, that he has a good head, and that the bump of caution is well developed—he never went too far. The pin's head seems to say, 'I stop here'.

V. **A Pin has a Point.**—Make a point every day of learning something that will help you to fix your mind on things above.

'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth' (Eccles. XII. 1).

Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store.

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 40.

# NEHEMIAH

## CHOOSING FOR ETERNITY

'Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.'—NEHEMIAH II. 4.

THERE is one thing which we all have to do very often, and that is, to make a choice—to choose something. It is a very important thing how we choose.

Will you look at Isaiah vii. 15. I wish you to attend to this verse very carefully. It is a very important verse. It is about the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.' Jesus Christ was once a little baby. When He was a very little baby He could not choose. No little baby can choose. And then Jesus Christ ate little babies' food. That was 'a land flowing with milk and honey'. Butter is made from milk. So babies' food in that country was 'butter and honey'. Jesus Christ ate 'butter and honey' when He was a little baby; and He did so that He might become strong, and grow up to boyhood; and when He was a boy then He began to choose. And Jesus Christ did what nobody else ever did in the world, He always 'chose the good and refused the evil'.

You and I have not always done so. Sometimes we 'choose evil,' and sometimes we 'choose good'. But Jesus Christ always 'chose the good and refused the evil'. So Jesus Christ made a wise choice.

I do not know how soon boys and girls can be said altogether to choose for themselves. Very little children cannot choose. But certainly when they leave off taking babies' food, then they can choose. We have all left off babies' food, and therefore we can all choose, and we are to try to choose like Jesus Christ.

That is one reason why it is so important to choose rightly, because we must try to be like Jesus Christ in everything; and if we do not choose rightly, we shall not be like Him.

Now you know you have a great many things to choose about. Let us name a few. (Some things your father and mother choose for you; some things God chooses for you; and some things you have to choose for yourselves.)

For instance, when you are called in the morning you can choose whether you will get up in a minute or remain in bed; and when dressing, you can choose whether you will dress very neatly or not, whether you will wash yourselves nicely or not; and when you kneel down to say your prayers, you can choose whether you will think about what you are saying or not; and when you go downstairs you can choose whether you will think all day about pleasant or

unpleasant things; you can choose selfish pleasures or unselfish pleasures—*i.e.* whether you like pleasures all to yourselves, or whether you like other people to share them with you; you can choose about your money, whether you will spend it wisely or foolishly; and then you can choose whom you will make your friends; whether they shall be people that will do you good, or whether you will make silly friendships; then you can choose what you will be when you grow up to be men and women—and that will be a very important choice; but I shall say more of that presently.

God gives us every day, and all day long, something to choose about; and the reason is because He wants to try us, to see whether we do right; to exercise our minds, and see whether we act according to the Bible. Therefore all day long we are put to this trial, as to how we choose, and what we choose.

Now, as it is so important that we choose well, because we have to choose so often, shall I give you a few rules first about choosing? If you will attend to me, I will give you one or two rules about how to choose.

The first rule I am going to give you perhaps you will say is a very odd one, but I think it is a very good one—never choose at all if you can help it. Do you understand me? If you can, let God choose for you, and do not choose for yourselves.

We have read this afternoon about a man who would not choose and a man who would choose. Abraham was a wise old man, and Lot was a foolish young man. Abraham would not choose, and Lot liked to choose. I think if Lot had been wise he would have said to his uncle Abraham, 'Do not let me choose, you will choose best'. But Lot was foolish and liked to choose for himself; and he came into a great deal of trouble. He soon 'pitched his tent toward Sodom'. That is a very important verse—not 'in Sodom,' but 'toward Sodom'.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians St. Paul says he does not know how to choose. 'What I shall choose, I wot not.' He did not know whether to choose life or death—therefore he left it to God to choose for him. I have known several of the Lord's children who, when upon their sick-beds, I have asked, 'Do you wish to die or live?' have wisely said, 'I do not wish to choose; I wish God to choose for me. I do not know which is best.'

Will you look at Psalm xl. vii. 4, 'He shall choose our inheritance for us'. David would not choose it for himself. That was very wise in him. And I dare say you can think of another time when David did the same thing. Because he had done very wrong



God said to him, 'Which will you have—famine, or pestilence, or war?' David would not choose at all; he did not say, 'I will have pestilence'; 'I will have war'; 'I will have famine'; but he said, 'Let me fall into the hand of God, and not into the hand of man'. Famine and pestilence would both be falling into the hand of God, and war into the hand of man; but he did not choose, he only said, 'Let God choose for me'. That was very wise.

A great man, Fénelon, was tutor to the Dauphin, the heir to the throne of France. But, while young, the prince died, and it was very bad for Fénelon, because if he had lived to come to the throne he would have been such a friend to him; there is no knowing what he would have done for him. It was remarked to Fénelon, 'Are not you sorry that the prince is dead?' He replied, 'I am not to choose'; and, pointing to a little straw, he said, 'If I, by moving that straw, could alter what God does, I would not move that straw'. He knew God would choose best for him.

Therefore my first rule is, Do not choose for yourself at all, if you can help it—let God choose for you—because nine times out of ten when boys and girls, or men and women, choose for themselves, they choose badly.

Now I am going to give you another rule. If you must choose, if it is your duty to choose, always, before you choose, lift up a little prayer to God to help you and guide you as to what you shall choose.

I will show you two places wherein God has promised to help you to choose rightly if you ask Him. The first is in Psalm xxv. 12, 'What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose'. God promises to all that fear Him to show them what to choose. Now turn to Proverbs iii. 6, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths'.

Now this brings me to my text. Will you all turn to it? You will see that Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the king, and a great king he was; and he said to Nehemiah one day, 'What do you want? What do you wish me to do?' Suppose the Queen of England were to say to one of us, 'What shall I do for you?' what a hurry some of you would be in; you would say, 'Here is an opportunity that may not occur again. I know what I want, I will ask for it directly.' Now this would be very foolish! We find Nehemiah paused a moment, and though he was present with the king, yet he looked up to the King of kings and breathed a little silent prayer; we have these beautiful words recorded by him, 'So I prayed to the God of heaven'. He asked God to tell him what to choose. When you have to choose anything, then remember what Nehemiah did. When the king asked him what he wanted, he lifted up a little prayer to God that He would not allow him to ask foolishly, but that He would enable him to make a wise choice.

I wonder whether you all know what a sweet and blessed thing it is to pray little silent prayers in your own hearts when you are in difficulty and perplexity?

We need not move our lips; but only have a little thought of prayer in our hearts. Oh that every child in this church would begin with it! Whenever you want to know what to do, whenever you are tempted to do something naughty, whenever you want help, lift up a prayer, 'Lord, help me!' 'Lord, guide me!' 'Lord, keep me!' This is what Nehemiah did.

When I was at Oxford there was a very good man there who was a master of one of the colleges, I need not mention his name. He was giving advice to a young man who had come to Oxford as to what he should do; and he said to him, 'put religion into everything. I will tell you how I mean. Mix up a little prayer with everything. Now, for instance, when you receive a letter by post, before you even venture to open it, always lift up a little prayer in your heart that you may be ready for what is in it; if the letter is a sad letter, with bad news, that you may be able to bear it; and if good news, that you may be thankful to God for it; and if it is for you to do something, that you may be ready to do it. Always, before opening a letter, pray a little prayer to God that you may be ready for the contents of it.'

This is putting religion into everything. This is what Nehemiah did. This is what I advise you to do as my second rule: Whenever you are called on to choose, offer up a prayer to be able to choose rightly.

Now I go on to the next rule—When going to choose always think of other people as well as of yourself, and try to choose unselfishly. Oh that all of you may be like Jesus Christ—unselfish! Do not choose to get the best for yourselves, but choose for other people.

Look at one of the greatest choices ever made in the world—the greatest—Hebrews xi. 24, 25, 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward'. Always, therefore, when you are choosing, think—'How can I choose so as to make others happy and do others good?'

Now I must tell you about a boy in order to explain what I mean. It is quite true. It happened not many years ago in Switzerland. The boy's name was Alphonso, and he had a mother living, but he was not brought up by her but by a good huntsman, who brought him up very religiously and gave him a good education.

When he was seventeen he had to choose what he would be; and, like many other boys, he thought he would be a soldier and enter the Swiss regiment then being formed for the service of the king of France. I do not know whether the Swiss are good soldiers, but they are particularly faithful. Many kings like to have Swiss soldiers to guard their persons, on account of their faithfulness; the French particularly like to have them.

Well, there was a Swiss regiment being formed, and

Alphonso wanted to join it. But his uncle thought it would be a great temptation to him and that he would thereby fall into sin; so he very strongly advised him not to be a soldier. But Alphonso said, 'I must, I must'. His uncle begged him again and again, with tears, not to be a soldier; but his mind was set on it. I suppose he had seen their red coats and wanted to wear one—for they wear red coats like the English soldiers.

At last Alphonso went. His uncle prayed God would turn his heart. All day and every evening he was praying to God. Alphonso went to his mother and his mother asked him not to be a soldier; but he said 'I am determined to be one'. His uncle prayed for him and his mother prayed for him; for three days and nights they prayed constantly—when, one morning, Alphonso knocked at his uncle's door—he was much surprised to find he was come back. When he came in Alphonso said, 'I am sure, uncle, you have been praying about me, for just as I reached the place there seemed to come a voice to my heart which said, "Don't! you must not do so!"' It seemed like a voice from God. I am come back to you and will not be a soldier, because I think God, in answer to your prayers, has determined I shall not.' So he lived a little longer with his uncle.

When Alphonso was about eighteen he went to be a tutor at Amsterdam. At that time the Dutch were equipping a fleet and it was offered to Alphonso to occupy a high position in one of the ships of war; and again all his old feelings came into his mind and he longed to accept the offer; but he thought of his uncle's prayers and of his duty and determined to give up going; so he refused the offer, though much tempted; and he prayed to God that, as He had stopped him from being a soldier and a sailor, He would make some use of him and show him what He would have him to be.

At that time the Dutch were interested in missionary matters and meetings were held on the subject, and Alphonso went and heard about the poor heathens and what was wanted, and the thought came into his heart, 'How I should like to be a missionary! Then I should be a soldier of Jesus Christ and useful indeed!' He returned home and began to think about it; but he felt so very unhappy on account of his own unworthiness that for six months he was quite miserable, saying, 'I am not worthy to be a missionary'.

At the end of the sixth month it pleased God to take away that feeling and to show him that, though weak, sinful, and unworthy in himself, yet God could make use of him if he were sincere. So he offered himself to the Missionary Society and they accepted him, and he became a missionary; and he went out as such and laboured very hard among the heathen, and very usefully, and God was pleased to employ him instrumentally in the conversion of many souls, because he followed not his own inclination but listened to the voice of Him who stopped him from being a soldier and a sailor. May God give us all

grace to choose that which shall make us useful to others!

Now I am going to give you another rule about choosing. I have given you three, and the fourth is this—Whenever you are choosing, choose that which will give you trouble at first! or, to put it into Bible language, I mean, choose the cross. You remember what our Blessed Saviour says about this in Matthew xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'. Choose what will give you trouble at first.

Suppose a boy at school has a lesson to learn and has an opportunity for a nice game, let him always learn the lesson first and then play—for he will enjoy his play much more if he has done what is right first—this is choosing first that which will give you trouble. In life you will always find that those enjoyments which give no trouble are not worth having; the greatest pleasures give some trouble at first. Therefore choose the cross—trouble first.

Leigh Richmond was very fond of music, and when at Cambridge he had a piano, and he thought, 'Is it right for me to have this piano, on which I shall be playing morning, noon, and night?' So he thought it would be right to put it away, which he did. That was taking up the cross. It was against flesh and blood—contrary to nature.

It is very difficult to get up early in the morning. Begin the day by conquering yourself. Determine to take up the cross. Do the difficult thing at once. Oh, let me impress upon you when you make a choice, choose that which will give you trouble at first.

Now I come to the most important of all. Whenever you choose, choose for your soul. Think of that. Choose for your soul. Choose for eternity.

Can you think of any person who chose for the soul? I can think of somebody whom even Jesus Christ praised for making a good choice. Do you remember? It is in Luke x. 41, 42, 'Jesus said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her'. What did Mary choose? To be close to Jesus—to sit at His feet—to love Jesus.

I think when Lot made his foolish choice, God says on purpose, just before that Abraham 'set up his altar'. Therefore Lot went away from the altar; he went away from Abraham's company, who was a pious man; and this was his great folly.

And when Ruth wished to go back to Canaan with her mother-in-law, I do not think it was only because she loved her; but she thought, 'Here I am with idolaters; in Canaan I shall be with Christian believers, the people of the God of Abraham'. She chose for her soul's sake. Choose for your souls.

I will give you a safe rule in choosing. You are a little boy or girl now—by and by, if you live, you will get old—be an old man or an old woman—you will lie on a sick bed, on a death-bed; now think, 'When I am lying on my dying bed, how shall I wish

then that I had rightly chosen! How will worldly pleasures look then?' That is the way to judge; how will things appear when you look back upon them? Everything is right according to the view they will present when we look back on them from the borders of eternity.

There was Solomon, how wisely he chose, 'Give me an understanding heart'.

You have heard of Matthew Henry, the good man who wrote a beautiful commentary on the Bible, perhaps the most beautiful that was ever written. His father was Philip Henry, and when he was a young man he married a Miss Matthews. I will tell you something about his marrying her.

When Philip Henry went down to the country where Miss Matthews lived people said, 'He is an excellent man, but we don't know anything about him, or where he comes from. We don't know whether he is a rich or poor man, or what family he belongs to.' When he wanted to marry Miss Matthews her father said to her, 'I would advise you not to choose this man for your husband because you don't know where he comes from or anything about him.' Miss Matthews said, 'I do not know where he comes from, but I know where he is going to. I can see it by his prayers, his conversation, his love of the Bible, and his good life. I know where he is going to, and I should like to go with him, I should like to go all my pilgrimage with him, and be with him at last, where he will be for ever. Therefore I will choose him to be my husband.' And so she chose him, and they were married, and she was the mother of Matthew Henry.

She chose for eternity, therefore she never regretted her choice. Her feeling was, 'He is going to heaven and I should like to go with him'.

I am going to set before you a beautiful example—I don't know that I could choose out of the whole world a more beautiful example than the one I am going to name to you—an example of a man who early chose the better part—it is that of the late Rev. George Wagner. I will remember the time when he was a boy; and I can remember the place and the time when, as a boy, he first gave his heart to God and made a good choice. He was at Eton; and the master of Eton told his uncle (the vicar of this parish) that of all the boys there (and there were six or seven hundred) there was none equal to George Wagner. He was the best boy at Eton—because he had made the right choice and was acting from principle. He went from thence to Trinity College, Cambridge, and the same testimony was borne there; it was said not a single boy led so spotless a life before man (as man judges) as Mr. George Wagner.

And as he chose God when he was a boy so, I consider, God blessed him as much, I may almost say more, than any man it has been my privilege to know. He blessed him by giving him so much of the mind and the likeness of Jesus Christ. He was a man eminently useful—always unselfish—always thinking of his

Master's work; always endeavouring to do good works; and he was a man liberal with his money to the greatest extent. Many are the good works in Brighton that are indebted entirely under God to the Rev. George Wagner.

He was a man (some of you knew him; and to know him was to love him)—he was a man full of love, and no one ever went out of his presence without feeling it. He was so simple—beautifully so. He was a man always doing good works and then stepping back that he might not be seen. Very few people in Brighton know what good works he did—because he never allowed himself to be seen. He was a man doing a work of prayer and love, bearing with him a beautiful bloom of humility and sweetness. I believe his Christ-like humility was the secret of his usefulness.

I say, 'Choose the Lord Jesus Christ'. Am I right? No, for after all it is not we who choose Christ—it is Christ who chooses us. We do choose Him; but when we see all the secrets revealed in heaven, we shall see that it is, as our blessed Lord saith (John xv. 16), 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### KING'S GARDENS

'The king's garden.'—NEHEMIAH III. 15.

I WANT to take you to see some gardens.

Let us turn into the first garden that was ever made; the most wonderful and the most beautiful that the world has ever seen. God caused to grow out of it every tree the fruit of which was most delicious, and every flower that was pleasant to look at; there were fine rivers flowing through it, now rippling along as pleasant little brooks by the rocks and the nodding ferns, or leaping down in foaming water-falls; then spreading out into glassy pools with flowers fringing the banks and trees bending down their leafy branches till they almost touched their own reflections. All kinds of fowl were swimming and flying there, that had never learned to be afraid; and on the banks were all kinds of wonderful creatures. This was the home of the first man, Adam. Here he lived with Eve his wife; here, amidst the sweet breath of flowers and with the golden fruits, where it was 'an everlasting spring,' and all was young and light and glad, and always beautiful. I think you could guess why it was so beautiful; because God made it, and because there was no sin in it, but God's blessing came on it like a constant sunshine and a gentle dew. You remember that when sin was brought in it was all spoiled; and the man was driven out to eat the herb of the field, and thorns and thistles grew instead of flowers.

There is another garden that I would take you to see. We must come to it on a moonlight night, when dark shadows are all about the trees and the silver light comes falling in here and there about the huge old trunks and twisted arms. Let us come softly and solemnly, for Jesus is here. He is pray-



ing; and as He prays the sorrows that He bears for us bow Him down in bitter anguish, and in His grief and agony He sweats as it were great drops of blood. He sinks down under the curse of the world's sin. And so, as the first sin was in the garden of Eden, the burden and curse of our sin were borne by Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

There is yet another garden that we read of in the Bible, even more beautiful than Eden, more holy than Gethsemane. It is the garden of which St. John writes. A garden like Eden, for there is a pure river of the water of life, and in the midst of it and on either side of the river is the tree of life. And there the fruits last all the year round, twelve manner of fruits, and fruits every month. And like Gethsemane, Jesus shall be there, but not in agony or grief. 'The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall feed them unto living fountains of waters.' And unlike Eden and Gethsemane, you and I may enter that garden, for Jesus says, 'to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God'.

But there is another garden of which the Bible tells us a great deal more than of these. A garden that I want you to think about as *the King's garden*—a garden with which we all of us have to do. Very often when I am going through a garden I come to some little bit marked off from the rest by a stick or a row of stones, and some lad or some little maiden comes running up; 'This is my garden,' they say, 'my very own, to do whatever I like with'. Now each of us has a garden, our very own, and yet it ought to be and must be the King's garden. You know what I mean—it is the garden of the soul, the garden of the heart.

I. I should like you to remember that **Gardens are made out of Waste Places**.—You have been in a forest and you know how the brambles cover it and the great trees grow in it, and there are the thick ferns; and here in the pits are beds of nettles, and in the damp places and round the edges of the pools the rushes grow. It is all wild and waste. I don't say that there is nothing good in it, or beautiful—there are primroses, and violets, and wild fruits. But there is no garden; not much else but brambles, and weeds, and great trees. Now, every garden was like that at first; it was wild, and tangled, and bramble-grown. And so it is with the King's garden. We want our heart to be nice and kind, and like a king's garden ought to be; and we look at the brambles and the waste places, and fear sometimes that it never can be made into a garden. 'I never shall be good,' you say. 'I never shall be like so and so.' You think of your mother, or of some good man or woman, and then you look at yourself and think that it is no use for you to try. When I was a little boy I learnt drawing, and one day when I had tried again and again, and couldn't do it right, I flung down the pencil and said angrily, 'I never shall be able to draw'. The master was a very kind and a very wise man. He laughed pleasantly, and said, 'Come, never

is a long time. I couldn't draw any better than you can when I was your age.' That put new life into me. He who could draw anything with his pencil, and could make it exactly right with just a touch, to think that once he could not draw any better than I could! I went at it again then and never felt inclined to give up afterwards. And so with the best people that ever lived. St. John, and St. Paul, and all the good people you have ever heard of, their hearts were wild and waste before they became the King's gardens. So we won't be giving up because we are not what we want to be. The King's garden was a waste at first.

II. Now perhaps the next thing you think of is that it must be **cleared**. Jesus says to us, 'My son, give Me thine heart'. He will never force it away from us. But if we give it to Him, He will take it just as it is, all waste and worthless, without any fruit and without any flowers, with nothing but brambles and weeds. He wants the heart, not because it is a garden, but that He may make a King's garden of it; filled with fruitful trees and pleasant flowers and sweetness and beauty, and that He may come in the garden and talk with us, as He came to Eden and talked with Adam there. So kneel and say to the Lord, 'Here is my heart, Lord Jesus; Thou dost ask for it; wild and waste as it is, I give it Thee. Make it into a King's garden where Thou shalt come.'

III. The next thing is that it be **Cleared and Planted**.—Of course the King's garden must have no weeds, or nettles, or brambles, or waste places in it. Weeds must be cleared up and burnt, and the waste places must be turned into flower-beds. There will be roses, and pinks, and lilies; there will be the mignonette with its sweet breath, and the pleasant borders of coloured leaves all laid out in beautiful order. There will be shrubs and there will be fruit-trees trimmed and trained, now white with blossom, now heavy with delicious fruit.

Love, like a sweet breath, shall fill it. Joy shall be in it, like the singing of birds. Peace shall grow there, and fill it with gentleness and quiet. Patience shall be there, with its sweet, meek-eyed flowers; and Gentleness, like a lily of the valley; and sturdy Goodness shall grow there, like a tree planted by a river; and Faith shall be round it like a strong wall; and Temperance—well, let that be a bright fountain in the middle of the garden. And wherever these are, *there* is the King's garden. So you see we have to give Jesus the garden of the heart, and we have to ask Him to create it clean and new.

IV. Then we have to **Keep this Garden for the King**.—Though it be a new heart and a clean heart it will want taking care of. If you will look at the story of Eden you will find that though the Lord caused the earth to bring forth the trees and flowers that were all 'very good,' yet He put the man into the garden to dress it and keep it. And we have to keep our hearts for the King. First we must plant it well, and keep getting better flowers and more fruit. There is a storehouse of seed where all the

King's gardeners have got theirs, and we can go and help ourselves—the seed is the Word of God. Then we must water it at least twice a day, and prayer is the watering; it refreshes and revives the King's garden, it keeps it alive. If we don't pray the garden will soon be dead and withered.

V. Then, in the last place, if it be the King's Garden the King Himself will Come to it.—Jesus Himself comes into the heart that is given to Him and kept for Him. He delights to come into it and walk and talk with His child there. And I will tell you why He delights so much to come. There was once a great king called Cyrus, who had a beautiful garden of which he was very fond. He used to watch it very much, and take such pleasure in it that people could hardly understand it. He said, 'I take so much interest in my garden because I have planted every plant and have sown every seed in it'. So it is that Jesus loves His garden. He turned it from a waste into a garden; He has sown the good seed and planted the trees; it is His garden.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 24.

### THE KING'S GARDEN

'The king's garden.'—NEHEMIAH III. 15.

THE three greatest scenes in the history of our human race are connected with gardens.

There is the garden of Eden, where man fell from the high and holy state of purity in which God had made him. There is the garden of Gethsemane, where the Saviour in His agony gave Himself up to the pain and death of the cross to save man from sin. There is, in the great vision of St. John, a garden—even the Paradise of God—in the midst of which is the Tree of Life, of which 'he that overcometh' may eat.

So that man fallen, man redeemed, man glorified—these three great points in the history of man are connected with gardens.

We cannot go far wrong, then, if we take an image which is so consecrated by the spirit of God, which is so associated with what is great in the past and full of hope for the future, and see what lessons it may teach us. And if we select a garden for our study, let it be a good one; so I have chosen the king's garden. The king's garden would no doubt be the best kept, the most complete in all its arrangements.

The first thing which a garden suggests to our thoughts is how great a difference there is between the same thing when cared for and uncared for. When you look at the garden which is close to your house, and then lift your eyes and look across it at the land beyond—all wild and rough, with no smooth grass and no trim flower-beds—you sometimes forget that the land is the same in both. The garden would be exactly like that park beyond, and that park would be exactly like that still wilder range of country lying farther distant, if they had been left alone. The same ground which bears the thistle and the brier and the deadly nightshade will, if ploughed and cultivated and planted, bring forth the fairest flowers and the richest fruits.

You know how the wild nature remains, even after all the care and culture of years. Let the gardener go away for a while and leave the garden to itself, and in even a few months what a change!

Every soul here is a garden of the King. It will bring forth something—fruits and flowers or thorns and briars. It needs daily care and daily watching. The first little atom of untruth, the first little bit of selfishness, the first little deed of disobedience, the first little thought of impurity—ask God to give you the courage, in the strength of our Blessed Saviour, to pull them out, not to wait for them to grow bigger. Every day will make it more difficult; every day will cause it to leave a wider scar behind when it is plucked up, for the roots spread wonderfully fast. I will tell you what will help you to do this more than anything else—Remember how the King loves His garden. He has watered it with the blood of His own dear Son. Think of that. Think of it when you are going to do wrong; think of it when you are ceasing to do right. The Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me, sees me now. He is hurt and grieved if I yield to the sin; He is rejoiced and glad when I resist it.

I remember Mr. Kinglake, in his *History of the Crimean War*, mentions that as the English troops marched, with beating drums and flying colours, towards the river Alma, where they were destined first to meet the enemy, they passed across wide patches of ground covered with the thick growth of a peculiar herb, which, as battalion after battalion tramped over it, gave forth a strange odour, and soon the whole air was laden with its fragrance. It attracted little attention until there came up some regiments which had been recruited in the western counties, and then a strange look passed over some faces, and here and there even an eye grew moist with tender memories, for they recognised the perfume which had often filled the village church at home when lads had brought bunches of the same southernwood—or 'boy's love,' as they used to call it—with them on a Sunday morning, and laid them beside some loved one's book of prayer; and some went on with braver hearts and nobler courage to the fight that day for queen and country, stirred by the tender memories of those days gone by.

I trust it may be so with some of you. There may come back to some of you, perhaps, in distant years, when he who taught you and the dear ones who worshipped with you are gone for ever, the fragrant memories of these Sundays here. And the sweet recollection of their love, of your own young fresh resolves and prayers, and hopes, on these happy Sundays may stir your hearts to a loftier courage and to a braver faith, as beneath the banner of the Cross of Christ you pass on into the Battle of Life.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *St. George for England*, p. 11.

### NEHEMIAH, THE MODEL MAN OF BUSINESS

'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.'—NEHEMIAH V. 3.

I. Nehemiah was a Model of 'Earnestness'.—We see this in him when he used the words of our

text and said: 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down'.

He was very busy then in building up the walls of Jerusalem. The enemies of the Jews wanted very much to hinder that work. They threatened to attack Nehemiah and the Jews while they were at work. But it was impossible to frighten them in this way.

Then they tried to get Nehemiah to come and meet them, pretending that they wanted to talk over matters with him. But he knew that if they could only get him in their power they would be apt to kill him. So his answer to them was, 'I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down'. So he went on with his work bravely and perseveringly, till it was done. He laboured on for twelve years for the good of Jerusalem, till he had finished the work which he went there to do. And here we see how earnest Nehemiah was as a business man. And we must be earnest too if we wish to be good boys and girls, or men and women of business.

*How Charley built the church.*—A minister had an appointment to preach in the country. On getting out of the cars at the station, according to the direction given him, he told the driver to take him to 'Ebenezer Chapel'. 'Ebenezer?' said the driver; 'oh, you mean little Charley's chapel, don't you?' 'No,' said the minister, 'I mean Ebenezer.' 'Yes, but we about here always call it "Little Charley's Chapel."' 'And why do you call it so?' asked the minister. 'Because little Charley laid the foundation-stone. You see, sir,' continued the driver, 'it happened in this way. A few years ago we wanted a new chapel. A meeting was called to talk the matter over. A good deal was said at that meeting about how the money could be raised. But the times were hard; and the people were poor; and labour and materials were very dear. So they resolved that the chapel could not be built; and then the meeting broke up.

'But a day or two after the meeting a little boy about nine years old came to the minister's door and rang the bell. The minister himself opened the door and found the little fellow there. His face was all flushed and the perspiration thick on his forehead. In front of him was his little toy wheelbarrow, and in the barrow were six new bricks. He had wheeled his load up a long, steep hill, and was out of breath, so that he could hardly speak. "Well, Charley," asked the wondering minister, "and what is the meaning of this?" "Oh, please, sir," said Charley, "I heard you wanted a new chapel and were about giving it up; so I begged these few bricks from the men who are building a house down in the village and thought they would do to begin with."

'With tears in his eyes the minister thanked Charley for what he had done. Then he called another meeting of the people about the chapel. Charley's bricks were piled up on the table in front of the minister. He told the story of what Charley had done. Then he made a little speech to them about it. He said, "If they were all as earnest in

the business of building the chapel as that little boy was the work would soon be done". This had a great effect on them. They resolved that the chapel should be built, but Charley laid the first stone. It is a big chapel. It will hold a thousand people and cost more than ten thousand dollars, and now it is out of debt.'

'And what has become of little Charley?' asked the minister. Here the old man's voice choked as he said: 'If you'll let me pull up at the churchyard, sir, I'll show you Charley's grave. There are many graves there, but you may always tell Charley's by the bright flowers upon it. He was the pet of the Sunday school, and the children never let a day go by without putting fresh flowers on his grave. He used to live close by the school, and he died the very day on which the last dollar of the chapel debt was paid. It was a summer's day, and he made them set his window open, that he might hear them sing. He asked them to sing a bright, happy tune, which was a favourite of his; and he died as he was trying to join them in singing it from his little bed.

'He sang the first verse of the hymn on earth; but we all believe that he finished it in heaven.'

Now certainly Charley was earnest in the business of building that chapel.

**II. As a Business Man, Nehemiah was a Model of 'Unselfishness'.**—He gave up his office under the king of Persia and the salary he was receiving there that he might go to Jerusalem to help his poor countrymen. Now if he had been a selfish man he would have said, 'I am very sorry that Jerusalem is in ruins and that my countrymen there are in so much trouble. I should like very much to help them. But if I go there I shall have to give up my salary, and I can't afford to do that.' But Nehemiah did not care about his salary. He was quite willing to let that go if he could only help to build up the walls of Jerusalem and be a comfort to the poor Jews there. And this shows us what an unselfish man he was!

And then, during the twelve years that he remained at Jerusalem as governor of the city, he was entitled to receive a salary every year. But this could only have been made up to him by the people of that city. And they were so poor that it would have been very hard for them to do it. So he refused to take any salary. And he stayed there through all those years at his own expense, working hard all the time to build up the city, and to do good to the people who lived there. And here we see that he was indeed a model business man because of his unselfishness.

And this is a good model for us to imitate. Our first story may be called—

*The unselfish brother.*—A boy whose name was Jean Sedaine, lost his father when he was thirteen years of age. They were living in France, about fifty miles from the city of Paris. He was left with a little brother about five years old. His brother's name was Pierre. They had a mother living in Paris; and after his father's death Jean's first desire was to get to Paris with his little brother, and try to find



their mother. This happened before the days of railroads. People used to travel then in large stages. In France these were called diligences. Jean went to the office of the diligence and asked what the fare was to Paris. They told him how much it cost. Then he found that he only had money enough to pay for one seat. So he took all the money he had to pay for his little brother; and he made up his mind that he would follow on foot as fast as he could. It was winter time when this took place.

Jean overtook the diligence the first time it stopped at an inn to change horses. As soon as he came up to it he found his little brother crying from the cold. He had no shawl nor anything to keep the poor fellow warm. So he nobly took off his own coat and wrapped it round his brother, willing to walk in his shirt sleeves if only the little fellow could be made comfortable. This touched the hearts of the other passengers and brought tears to their eyes. They took up a collection among themselves and soon had money enough to pay for Jean's passage. They gave him a seat by the side of his brother. This made them both feel very happy.

*The dying girl's penny.*—A little girl attended a missionary meeting and sat upon her father's knee. While listening with deep attention to the missionary telling about the miseries and cruelties the poor heathen had to suffer, her father saw the tears trickling down her cheeks.

When they reached home she said: 'Father, can't I do something to help to send the Gospel to the heathen?'

'What can you do, my child?' said her father. 'You are but a little girl, and you have no money to give.'

'Mother gives me a penny a week,' said the child; 'couldn't I give that?'

'Yes, you can,' said her father, 'and I'll buy you a little box to put it in.'

The next day her father bought her a little earthenware box with a hole in the top of it, and every week the dear child dropped her penny into it.

Not many weeks after this the little girl was taken ill, and died. Soon after her funeral, her father took the box to the minister. He placed it in his hands, and said: 'This box belonged to my dear daughter who was buried the other day. It contains what she was saving for the missionaries.' Then he told him about the missionary meeting, and what she said on coming home from that meeting, and added:—

'I hadn't the heart to break it myself, so I have brought it to you; if you will break it, you will find seventeen pennies in it.'

The minister broke the box, but on counting over the pennies he found that there were *eighteen* instead of seventeen. The father was surprised, and couldn't understand where the other penny came from. He asked the minister if it was not just seventeen weeks since that missionary meeting was held. The minister thought it over a little while, and then said: 'Yes, it is just seventeen weeks'. And there they had to leave it. But when the father

reached home he told his wife about it, and asked her if she knew where the other penny came from?

'Oh, yes,' she said, 'I can tell you all about it. The day before our dear child died, a kind neighbour called in to see her. Observing how feverish and parched her lips were, she said on leaving, "Here, my child, is a penny to buy an orange to moisten your lips with". When the neighbour was gone, our dear little one called me to her bedside, and said, "Mother, 'tis true I am very thirsty, and the orange would be real nice; but I would rather you would fetch my missionary-box, that I may drop the penny in there". I carried her the box, and it was the last thing she did before she died. With a trembling hand, and a smile on her pale cheek, she dropped the money in, saying as she did so, "The heathen need the gospel more than I need an orange". And that penny made up the eighteen found in her box.' How beautiful that was! That little girl was imitating this point of Nehemiah's model. In the important business of helping on the missionary work she was—unselfish.

**III. As a Business Man, Nehemiah was a Model of 'Faithfulness'.**—The business he undertook to do at Jerusalem was very trying and troublesome. But before starting in it, he made up his mind to be faithful, and go steadily on with it, whatever might happen. A long succession of difficulties met him in attending to that business. His enemies began their efforts to hinder him by making sport of what the Jews were doing. They said if even a fox should tread upon the wall the Jews were building, it would tumble down. Yet Nehemiah did not care for their ridicule, but went steadily on with his work. Then his enemies tried to frighten him. They threatened to attack him and his friends while they were working on the wall. But Nehemiah girded his sword by his side, and told his friends to do the same. They went to work in this way, and their enemies were afraid to attack them. Then the enemies of Nehemiah laid all sorts of snares and traps to hinder him in his work; but he turned away from them, and went steadily on with what he was doing. Then they wrote to the king, his master, and charged Nehemiah with rebellion against his authority. This made it necessary for him to go all the way back to Shushan, in order to explain matters to the king, and to prove to him that there was no truth in what his enemies had written about him. But even this did not discourage him. He made it all right with the king; and then returned to Jerusalem, and went bravely on with his work there. As a man of business, he was a grand model of faithfulness. And we must learn to be faithful too, in all we undertake, if we hope to be useful and successful in our work.

**IV. When we look at Nehemiah as a Business Man, we find him a Model of 'Prayer'.**—In the opening chapter of the book which is called by his name, and which contains the history of his great work, we learn that when he heard of the sad state of things among his countrymen at Jerusalem, the very

first thing he did was to engage in prayer to God. We can turn to the first chapter of Nehemiah and read this prayer. There we see how he began by asking God to make the king willing to let him go to Jerusalem, and build up its walls. That prayer was answered, and the way was opened for him to go. And then, as he met with one difficulty after another in carrying on his work at Jerusalem, we find him continually praying to God to remember him, and to help him.

We have a beautiful prayer of Nehemiah's in the ninth chapter of his book. This occupies almost the entire chapter, which is quite a long one. In reading this prayer we can judge of the way in which he used to pray for himself and for his friends who were helping in his work.

In the last chapter of his book we find four short prayers. This shows us how he was in the habit of connecting prayer to God with all the work in which he was engaged. The very last sentence in the book of Nehemiah is the prayer, 'Remember me, O my God, for good'.

And there is no one point in the model of the business man which Nehemiah has left us that is more important than this. He was a model of prayer in everything that he did. If we hope to be successful in any work that we undertake, nothing is more important than to mingle prayer with it, as Nehemiah did. Let us be sure to imitate this point of the model he has left us. No limits can be put to the help we may get in answer to prayer.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 224.

#### AGAINST THE STREAM

'So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.'—NEHEMIAH V. 15

WOULDN'T it make a long list if we were to put down all the things we *didn't* do! What are history books made up of? Isn't it about what people *did*? These take up a good deal of space, and take some time to read, too; but if we were only told what people didn't do, the oldest man wouldn't have got through the books, though he began to read when he was a little child. No! not about even what one boy or one girl didn't do! So there is a chance for some of you, when you grow up and want to become authors and write books. Write about what people haven't done, and you will never be out of employment.

And sometimes you will have to praise them for what they haven't done, and sometimes you will have to blame them. It all depends. If they haven't done what they shouldn't have done, then that is good; but if they haven't done what they should have done, then it is bad. Everything turns on this.

Try to learn how to keep right about both these things. How many words do you suppose there are in the big English dictionaries? Thirty-eight thousand! What a lot! To know them all would be like knowing all the leaves in a chestnut-tree in spring-time. Yet, what do you think they all grow from? From two tiny little words which every baby soon learns to say, 'Yes' and 'No.' These are the seeds; all the rest are the branches, the leaves, the flowers,

and the fruits. For as soon as anybody says 'Yes' or 'No,' then somebody else wants to know Why? or How?—and so more words have to be found to explain it all.

You must respect, then, and very much respect, these two. There is a time to say 'Yes,' and say it firmly, and there is a time to say 'No,' and say it as if you meant it. The way to know the proper time and the proper word to speak is—Remember the Lord. What would He wish? What would He do? What would He have you to do? Once you go by this simple rule—a rule that never fails—you will not have any difficulty in knowing the things you shouldn't do, or the things you should.

There is one time specially when you must say 'No,' and say it promptly, decidedly, and firmly. 'When sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' Say 'No!'—and say it in capital letters, as it were. They can't compel you; nobody can compel you to sin. All they can do is to entice you. You know what that means; it is coaxing, promising, tempting. The nice bait that is put on the hook is in order to entice the fish, the crumbs that are thrown on the ground near to the trap are in order to entice the bird, and the fine promises and the glittering words sinners use are all to entice you. But the bait is useless and the crumbs can do nothing till the fish or the bird consents, and no more can other people lead you into sin till you are willing to be led. Everything depends on yourself.

There is one favourite bait you must be very watchful over. It is when they whisper to you, 'What does it matter? It must be right, for everybody does it.' Take care of that. If a thing is right, it is right because it is *right*, and not because a thousand people do it; and if it is wrong, it is wrong, though it were done by everybody in the world. When any one speaks to you, then, in this way, lift up your heart. Think about God—and then think about yourself. If it is wrong, *don't do it*, no matter how many may. Dare to be a Daniel: when everybody else bowed down to the image, he would not—he remembered God, and God remembered him for good. Dare to be a Joseph: when he could have sinned and got riches by it, he would not, and God made it all up to him over and over again. Dare to be like Jesus: when the tempter offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them if He would only fall down and worship him, Jesus would not. He dared to say No! though all the world said Yes!

Take your orders morning by morning and day by day from Jesus, and whenever you are in any doubt or difficulty, or can't quite see your way, refer the matter to the Lord, and He will give you the light you need. Be true to that light; it is sent for you, whatever light may be sent for others. 'The fear of the Lord'—keep that uppermost in your heart, and be guided by it, and you will have the blessing of blessings—the blessing of a good conscience—as you say, 'This did I,' or 'This did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.'—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 57.

# ESTHER

## OF THE MYRTLE THAT BECAME A STAR

‘Hadassah, that is Esther.’—ESTHER II. 7.

As Esther is the person that stands, as it were, in the middle all through this book, I have taken her two names to gather round them some lessons, taught by the story of her life as we get it here. Now, let us look at her as being—

- I. An orphan.
- II. A captive.
- III. A beautiful maid.
- IV. A queen.

Let us speak of—

**I. Hadassah the Orphan.**—She had neither father nor mother. And she must have lost them at an early age, for Mordecai brought her up. Perhaps she could not recollect them. Her mother, it may be, died when she was born. There are two children that we read of in the Old Testament who never could know their mothers. And perhaps Esther never saw her father. One of the two boys I mean never saw his. But it may be, on the other hand, that the little girl had sweet recollections of both father and mother. Perhaps she remembered her mother taking her when a very little child in her lap, and telling her old stories out of the Bible,—how the babe Moses was found in the basket by the river’s brink, or how God called to Samuel when he was lying on his bed; or how the little captive maid told her mistress of the prophet that could cure her master’s leprosy. Perhaps she remembered her father praying with his face looking towards Jerusalem, or calling her to his side and teaching her the twenty-third psalm in Hebrew. But she had nothing more than recollections, for both father and mother died, and Hadassah could only think of them or dream of them as away to the spirit-land.

Remember Esther. She was provided for. Her cousin Mordecai took her for his own daughter. He found a little tree, growing without shelter from the storms, and he planted it by his own hearth. Hadassah means a myrtle; and I am sure, from what Esther was afterwards, that he had reward enough in looking at the fair sweet plant he had brought into his house, long before the king took it into his palace. I am sure there never was evergreen shrub so beautiful an ornament of cottage garden, or window sill, or rich man’s conservatory, as was the little orphan myrtle Mordecai took home to care for. Let us look now at—

**II. Hadassah the Captive.**—I should rather call her captive-born. For as the captivity had lasted seventy years, and these things happened after the

restoration, of course Esther could not be herself a captive. We may call her rather the exile. Mordecai himself, if brought from Judah, must have been then a mere child. But though this was the case, Persia was not the land of Esther. She was a Jewess.

Now, every one loves his native country, or should love it. Not, indeed, with a proud, senseless, boasting spirit, which leads to despise others, but tenderly and truly. We have a country very much worth loving. It is a beautiful country; it has not such soft, sunny skies as more southern lands, but it has grand mountains, smiling valleys, fair green fields. It lies, both stern and soft, rugged and garden-like, amid the seas. But, better than that, it is a free country. People can speak their mind, and worship God in it according to their conscience. It was not always so in Britain itself, but it is so now. And there are a great many wise, good, holy men in it. Bibles are abundant in it. Every one of you may have a copy for himself. Have you seen the picture of reading the Bible in the crypt of Old St. Paul’s? See the book is chained to the desk; it is too precious to be trusted with any one. What different days now! Give God thanks for the country you live in. In some other countries they cannot read the Bible openly yet. They cannot get it in the shops to buy. Mistaken and wicked men will not allow their fellow-creatures to hear what God says to them. Try to make your country yet better than it is. In this land thousands that might have the Bible either do not have it, or do not use it. Here’s the way true love of your country should work—strive to make people in it worthier of God’s goodness to it.

If it be hard to leave our country willingly, it must be much harder to be torn from it to see it no more. That was the case with Esther’s people. War had come and dragged them away from their fertile land, their beautiful Jerusalem, their magnificent Temple. Oh, the sad talks they had with each other about it! Oh, the sad wail they used to raise when they remembered Zion. ‘By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept.’ So one of them speaks about their grief. But God had bid them, when taken captive, to seek the good of the land where they dwelt. If you ever go abroad, or without going abroad, are so separated from your father’s house, that you feel very lonely, do not give way to idle grief; do not sit down and mourn, but do your work bravely, and think how God is with you. I once knew a youth that, going to some distance from all his friends to a new situation, felt so wretched at first that he actually wished he might become ill so as to be taken home; but he



lived to be useful and very happy where he allowed himself to form that wrong wish. The captive Jews found the same thing in many cases. God prospered them so much that, as we saw already, they would not go back to Jerusalem when they got the opportunity.

Yet the captivity reads a loud warning to us about sin. God will correct it even in His own people. He must have been very grieved to destroy His own Temple, and His own Salem. Yet He did it to show His displeasure with sin. He may be very loath to punish a bad child of pious parents; but He will, unless the child repent. What one thing most of all showed God's hatred of sin, at the same time that it showed His love to us? You cannot miss the answer if you read Romans vii. 32. We proposed to speak of—

**III. Hadassah the Beautiful Maiden.**—The text says 'she was fair and beautiful'. The Bible speaks of the beauty of several individuals much honoured in its histories. Sarah and Rachel, and Moses and David, and others, were goodly persons.

Nobody should despise beauty of face. It gives pleasure. It is a power that may be used for good. It is very sweet in children. It is a creature of God. Nay, God is fond of what is beautiful. He has put a great deal of beauty into the world, and He must like to see it. Beautiful are His stars, His clouds, His rainbow, up in the sky. Beautiful are His woods, His flowers, His dewdrops down on the earth. What a feast of pleasure He has spread for us in them all! And we ought to thank Him for making the face of children so often very beautiful.

Bad character spoils beauty. Who cares for Absalom's fine face, and the locks he was so proud of, when thinking of his rebellion against his good old father. And in any case mere beauty of face is a very poor thing to be proud of. It soon fades away. Death feeds on it. It is a dangerous thing to be proud of. It has led many a one to sin, and death, and hell. You must seek for something higher and better than this. As far as I can now remember, the New Testament never tells us about beauty of person in the good people we read of there. It describes a higher beauty. It tells us of the child Jesus 'waxing strong in spirit, filled with wisdom'; of Mary's humble attention, and great faith; of Dorcas's good works; but never how they looked. It paints only beauty of soul. If you want to see a very finished picture of that, see it in 1 Corinthians xiii. Love is the grand beautifier. Some people buy cosmetics to make their faces beautiful; if they would put more love into the heart, it would be better than them all.

This beauty of soul makes up for the want of beauty where it is not. I have seen some sickly and some plain faces that were lovely through the shining out from within of a happy, kind heart. This beauty all may have. Ask the Holy Spirit for it, and you will get it. It makes other beauty, where it is, more

beautiful. There's a flower; it looks fair under the cloud; but bring it into the sunshine, and see how bright it shows. A fair face, with a loving spirit looking through it, is a flower bathed in sunshine. Many a fair face has been spoiled by passion, bad temper, an unholy heart. Some fair faces have been forgotten in the beauty that came out through them from the soul. This beauty does not decay with age. I have seen it shine sweetest amid wrinkles, and from under hoary hairs. And this beauty restores the beauty which death blights. Those who possess it will rise from their graves bright as angels. Their faces will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Esther, to which Hadassah's name was changed, means a star. And you remember it is written, 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever'. Let us take a glance at—

**IV. Esther the Queen.**—Though a great and favoured queen, she was humble. This was one of the very things that brought her favour. She was not exacting, she was not proud. She did not forget Mordecai or cease to take his advice. She feared God; and when she was going to seek the deliverance of her people, she fasted and prayed to the Lord. This, after all, made her far happier than her crown did.

Happy Persia, to be blessed with such a queen! You, too, young friends, have a queen for whose character you ought to give God thanks. Pray for long life and growing honour to Queen Victoria. Next time you hear the National Anthem, feel in your hearts to say, in devout earnest, God save the Queen!

Let us part with a wish. Here it is:—

May you grow like a myrtle, and glow like a star?

Grow as a myrtle. Two qualities it has that I would like you to resemble. It is ever green. It cheers the winter as well as the summer. So be ye kind and lovely, in dark days as well as bright, in adversity as in prosperity. And the first time you see a myrtle, press one of its leaves with your thumb and finger, and scent its sweet fragrance. Then think—so let me be giving out a sweet savour of godliness, making the house I live in as pleasant as if some perfume were filling the air.

And glow like a star. What makes the star shine? God clothed it with light. So walk you in light—Christ's light—the light of truth, and love, and holiness. Where shines the star?

Up above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky.

There the star shines. It has its home in heaven. There, at last, may you shine. There be your home for ever.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 109.

# JOB

## JOB, THE MODEL OF PIETY

'Job . . . was . . . one that feared God.'—JOB I. 1.

THE history of Job is very interesting. We find the book that bears his name placed next to the Book of Psalms in the Bible, but we must not suppose from this that Job lived about the time of David. This was not the case. Job must have lived not very long after the Deluge. Somewhere between the time of Noah and of Abraham is about the place to which he belonged.

The Book of Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible, or in the world. It is a wonderful book on many accounts. And one of the most wonderful things about it is the amount of knowledge it contains in reference to astronomy and natural history, geography and such-like subjects. But more wonderful still than this is the knowledge that we find in the Book of Job about God and the nature of His service, and the right way of worshipping Him. And so, when we come to speak of Job as one of the Bible models, perhaps the best thing to do will be to consider him as the *model of piety*.

This is just the view of his character which the words of our text would lead us to take. 'Job—was—one that feared God.'

And when we come to study this model, we find that there are *five* things about it which we should remember, and try to imitate.

**I. Job was a Model of 'Home Piety.'**—The Apostle Paul tells us that we should 'learn first to show piety at home' (1 Tim. v. 4). This is the right place in which piety should be shown. Some persons are particular about going regularly to church. They pretend to be very good and pious when among strangers, but they are not careful how they act at home. This is not right. If we are really trying to be good Christians, and to love and serve God, then *home* is the place in which we should let our religion be seen. It should make us more respectful and obedient to our parents, and more kind and loving and gentle to our brothers and sisters, and to all about us at home, than those are who do not profess to be Christians.

This was what Job's piety did for him. He had seven sons and three daughters. He was in the habit of having family worship with them. They had grown up to be good men and women under the influence of their father's home piety. His sons were settled near their father, in houses of their own. They were in the habit of having social gatherings at each other's houses. Their sisters, and all the members of their large family, were always invited to

be present on these occasions. And when the feasting was over, their father was accustomed to gather them all together for special religious services, when he prayed that God would forgive them if any of them had said, or thought, or felt, or done anything that was wrong while the feasting was going on. And it was in this way that Job was a model of piety at home. And we should all try to follow his example here. For while real piety is a beautiful thing to see anywhere, it is always most beautiful when seen at home. Here are some illustrations of this statement.

*The power of example.*—A young man who was about to be ordained to the ministry, in talking with a friend about what led him to become a Christian, said:—

'I was once very near becoming an infidel, but there was one argument in favour of the religion of Christ which I could never answer, and that was the beautifully consistent life of my father. *This* was the only thing that kept me from becoming an infidel. My father's beautiful home piety was what saved me.'

*How children may show piety at home.*—An old lady was sitting in her arm-chair by the fire. To a friend who came in to see her, she said: 'Look at my little granddaughter there; she is feet, and hands, and eyes, and everything to me.'

'How so?' asked her friend.

'Why, you see, she runs about so nimbly to do the work of the house; she fetches me so willingly whatever I want; and when she has done, she sits down and reads so nicely to me a chapter in the Bible. She is like a little angel to me.' That dear child had learned to 'show piety at home,' and this is the best thing for us all to learn.

Job was a model of home piety. Let us all try to follow his example in this respect.

**II. Job was a Model of 'Intelligent' Piety.**—Job lived so long ago that we could hardly have expected to find he had very clear views about the character of God, and the way to serve Him. But he had. Indeed, it is wonderful how much he knew about these things. Let us take a single passage from the Book of Job to illustrate this point. In the nineteenth chapter, verses 25, 26, we find him speaking thus: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.' These words are used in our Burial Service. We repeat them beside the open graves in which we bury our friends when they die. They are very beautiful words. They point us to Jesus. They show us that Job knew about the Saviour

Who was to come into the world in the fulness of time, and who was to secure to His people the resurrection from the dead.

Job lived before any part of the Bible had been written. But he got his knowledge about these things from the God of the Bible. And when we remember this, we do not wonder so much to find how clear his views were about God and His service. He went to God for his knowledge, and it was this which made him a model of intelligent piety.

And if we wish to imitate Job in this respect, we must get our views of what true piety is from the Bible. All knowledge is valuable—but the knowledge of God, and the right way of serving Him, which we get from the Bible, is the most valuable of all. St. Paul said this knowledge was so excellent that he would consider the loss of everything he had a gain, if he might secure it in this way.

And if we come to the Bible to find out what true piety is, and how we are to serve God, we shall understand this matter as Job did, and our piety, like his, will be intelligent piety.

*A cure for anger.*—Two little sisters, one seven and the other five years old, were playing together, when a dispute arose between them. Lucy, the elder, feeling that her anger was rising, said:—

‘I am getting angry; I had better go out of the room for a few minutes.’

She went out, and going to her own room kneeled down and asked God to help her not to get angry. Then she went to her sister, and as it always takes two to make a quarrel, there was no quarrel between those sisters, because Lucy would have nothing to do with it.

She had not read the Bible in vain. She understood the meaning of such sweet promises as these, ‘Fear not, for I will help thee’ (Is. xli. 10). ‘Ask, and it shall be given you’ (Matt. vii. 7). And this knowledge was a great help to her. Her piety was an intelligent piety.

*True comfort.*—An aged Christian was once reduced to great poverty, and yet he never murmured. A kind-hearted neighbour met him in the street one day, and said to him: ‘You must be badly off, I cannot tell how you manage to maintain yourself and your wife; and yet you are always cheerful.’

‘Oh no,’ said the old Christian, ‘we are not badly off. We have a rich Father, and He does not suffer us to want.’

‘Is it possible that your father is not dead yet? Why, he must be very old indeed.’

‘My Father never dies. Of course I mean my Father in heaven. He always takes care of me.’ This old man understood the meaning of God’s promises, and he believed them. This made him happy. And this is enough to make anyone happy. This poor man shows us how we may imitate the model Job sets before us of—intelligent piety.

**III. Job was a Model of ‘Practical’ Piety.**—We have some examples of good Christian men and women who are like Job in this respect. But there

ought to be many more of the same kind. Indeed, every Christian ought to imitate the model of practical piety that we find in Job. And if we really love Jesus, there is no better way in which we can show our love to Him than by trying to be like Job in this respect.

And if, from the example of Job, we look up to the example of Jesus, we shall find them both very much alike in this respect. When Jesus ‘went about doing good’ He was making His piety practical. And if we wish to be His true and faithful followers, we must learn to ‘tread in the blessed steps of His most holy life’. Let us look at some illustrations of the way in which we may do this.

*Bessie and her mission.*—Pansie Merl was a little girl about seven years old. She was trying to be a Christian. During a long spell of sickness which Pansie had, her dear mother made her a doll. They called the doll Bessie. The good mother cut out a lot of underclothes for the doll, with dresses, and aprons, and sacques, and then she helped Pansie to make them all up. After that, during all her sickness, Pansie spent a great deal of time in dressing and undressing her doll, and in folding up her clothes and putting them away in a nice little set of drawers which her father had given her. And in doing this the dear child found the greatest possible delight and comfort.

When she got well she continued to feel a great interest in the doll, and never forgot the comfort she had found in it during her sickness. And while thinking about it one day, the idea came into her mind that she might make her dolly a sort of missionary. She made up her mind that when she heard of a sick child in their neighbourhood, too poor to have any playthings, she would take her dolly, and the little trunk containing its clothes, and lend it to the poor child to amuse and comfort her, until she got well again. Then when dolly came back she had her mended. Her clothes also were mended and washed, so as to be ready for another mission of mercy. That was Bessie’s mission. And many a poor sick child was made happy in this way. Surely that little girl, in her own simple way, was following the example of practical piety which the Patriarch Job left us so long ago.

**IV. We have in Job a Model of ‘Patient’ Piety.**—The patience of Job was beautiful indeed at the beginning; but it did not last. When he found that his trials continued longer than he expected, he got discouraged, and said some very impatient things. He failed in his patience before he got through with his trials. And so it is with all the examples of piety and patience that we find among our fellow-creatures. They fail, like Job, sooner or later. If we examine them closely, we shall be sure to find a blot about them somewhere. But it is different with Jesus, our blessed Saviour. His example is the only really perfect one that was ever seen in this world. His example is perfect in everything. But it is especially so in His patience.

V. But then there is one other point for us to notice,



in the model of piety which we have in Job, and that is, **He was a Model, or Example of 'Rewarded' Piety.**—When Satan was trying to get permission to tempt Job, one of the questions that he asked was, 'Does Job serve God for nought?' He meant to say that Job was selfish in his religion, and only served God for the pay or profit he expected from it. But he was mistaken here. Job was not selfish in his religion. He knew very well that there was a reward to be found in the service of God. But this was not the only thing he thought of in that service. When God gives us promises as His servants, he means that we should think about them and be influenced by them.

*Profitable living.*—A collecting agent for the American Bible Society called on a plain farmer for his contribution to the Bible cause. He was not by any means a wealthy man, but worked his own farm. He looked over his books for a few moments, and then said, 'My contribution this year will be seventy dollars.'

'Why, this is a wonderfully large contribution,' said the collector. 'How can you afford to give so much?'

'I will tell you,' said the farmer. 'Six years ago I felt that I was not giving as much as I ought to give. So I made up my mind that I would try to give in proportion to what the Lord was giving to me. This was the plan which I concluded to adopt. I said to myself, I will lay aside for the Lord's use five cents on every bushel of wheat I raise; three cents on every bushel of oats or barley; and ten cents out of every dollar made by the wool and butter, and other things that I sell from my farm. At the close of the first year, after adopting this plan, I found that I had twenty dollars to give away. The second year I had thirty-five dollars; the third year, forty-seven; the fourth, forty-nine; the fifth, fifty-nine; and this year I have seventy dollars to give away. My own experience proves the truth of Solomon's words, when he says, in one place, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;" and in another place, "The liberal soul shall be made fat".'

We see the piety of this good man in the liberal way in which he made use of his money for doing good with it. And we see how his piety was rewarded in the gradual increase of his income. This is one of the ways in which God rewards those who show their piety by giving freely to His cause.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 44.

#### A HAPPY FAMILY GATHERING IN PATRI-ARCHAL DAYS

##### I

'And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them.

'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.'—JOB 1. 4, 5.

WHAT an attractive scene have we here, long, long ago, when the world was yet young!

The meeting took place in some Eastern desert: but no one can tell precisely where. Some have thought that it was near Mount Hor where Aaron died—the red hills of Edom. Some that it was farther north in the land of Gilead or Bashan. Job and his children had been celebrating, I do not know precisely what. It was evidently a holiday of some kind. It may have been a birthday, or a marriage day; or I have often imagined a New Year's Day. We have good reason to believe that Job lived before the Israelites had trodden the wilderness on their way from Egypt to Canaan. He was the Prince or Head of a tribe. He was very rich and powerful. His riches consisted not in coins of silver and gold, and bags of money—but in vast flocks of cattle that browsed in the desert pasture; sheep and camels, oxen and asses. There was no greater man in all the East. His name was known far and wide among the wandering tribes. What was rarer, and at all events better than everything else, he was as good as he was famous. The Great God of heaven called him His 'servant'; and spoke of him more approvingly than perhaps of any other person in Bible history. He was a kind father. He was also a kind master (for no less than three times did his servants risk their lives to save his property). He had evidently what we call a very feeling heart. Among savage tribes there is often little thought given, or mercy and pity shown, to the suffering and the sorrowful: they live only for plunder or revenge. But Job loved to wipe the orphan's tears, and to make the widow's heart to sing for joy (Job xxx. 13). When he was seen walking along, the little children were not afraid of this desert king, but would kneel, as he passed, with a smile on their faces; or they would kiss his hand, or the fringe of his Arab dress. He tells us himself, 'When the ear heard me, then it blest me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me' (Job xxx. 11).

Job's vast followers—his family and servants and slaves—we may suppose had different kinds of dwellings. Some lived, as the Arabs do to this day, in black and striped tents—a circle of them, with the camels placed in the centre. We know, however, that they had stone houses too, perhaps not built as ours, but hollowed out in the soft sandstone rocks as we see in pictures of the old city of Petra.

Well, without venturing to say exactly what sort of a holiday it was, let us see how they kept it.

They had a feast (day about) at each other's houses. And we can readily suppose what a very happy time it would be. Just like similar meetings among yourselves, when your brothers and sisters come home for the holidays from school, to the old parental roof again. It is a beautiful picture too of real family affection. There were no jars nor disagreements. Any Christmas time or Christmas home in a Christian land could not have been more joyful. 'See how these brothers and sisters love one another!'

Shall I tell you why I think they were happy, and

had no quarrels? It was because they had been taught by their noble-hearted father to fear God; and he who loves God, loves his brother also.

Let us imagine the scene!

The tall camels moving along the sands; the brothers and sisters looking anxiously out of the stone windows (or flat roofs when they had them) of their rocky houses, to see if their loved ones were coming. And then, how cheering when they did arrive! How much they would have to tell, and talk about! A writer on Job well observes that there was no post, or letters, or telegraph, or railways in these days as in ours. So that if their gatherings were seldom, their joy would be all the greater when they had them.

But I think the happiest meeting would be the one which seems to have been held last. All good children love their parents, and I think the children of Job must have loved him specially. He was so gentle, and kind, and patient. You can think of them, therefore, on that closing day—very likely the greatest day of the feast—the concluding one of their holiday. They met in their father's house this time. I can picture too how pleased he would be. As the head or Chieftain of the encampment, he would be attired in his best raiment. He would have on his red striped cloak and silver sandals. The gold ribbon or fillet would be entwined round the kerchief he wore. The very beasts of burden would have their scarlet trappings; rich carpets instead of saddles on their backs, and chains dangling from their necks. As camel load after camel load, company after company arrive, he would embrace each member of the family circle, on their alighting nimbly from the animals they rode. If he has a fatted calf on his pastures, I am sure he would bring it forth, and say, as he is seated amid his rejoicing children—'It is meet that we should make merry and be glad'.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 53.

## II

'And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them.'

'And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.'—JOB. I. 4, 5.

ONCE more let us revert to this bright old-world gathering in a happy home in some far-off land.

I like often to think of that kind, good, noble Patriarch. He always reminds me of some beautiful tall column, towering high above the dim mists of the past: or of one of his own graceful desert palm-trees on the far horizon fixing the gaze and admiration of distant ages.

Apart altogether from his goodness, there was much to attract towards this great chieftain or Shepherd-King himself. The book which gives us his history, and which is one of the oldest and most interesting

in existence, shows him to have been a great lover of the outer world. He evidently made the grand Book of Nature his study; whether it was 'the fowls of the air'; or 'the dew upon the branch'; or 'the rivers among the rocks'; or the clear azure sky by day; or the brow of night in that eastern region girdled with her most glorious diadem of stars: 'the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness' (Job xxxi. 26).

Then, in addition to his untold wealth in flocks and herds, we have seen what a rarely loving and united family he had. There were no quarrellings among them. Nothing that separated brother from brother, and sister from sister. We are reminded of the words of the Psalmist: 'Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is to dwell together in unity' (Ps. cxxxiii. 1). His sons were 'as plants grown up in their youth, and his daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace' (Ps. xciv. 12). In all the world there seemed to be no more enviable lot than his.

I cannot help thinking of Job as the *Christian* of that patriarchal age. He felt the need of a Sacrifice and a Redeemer. In his own dim shadowy fashion he looked onwards and forwards to the one Great Sacrifice, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. I like to recall the good old Patriarch in this way, honouring the future Messiah. That altar of the desert was a prophecy of Christ's coming—not in word, but in expressive action. I like, too, thus to think of him as one of those Gentiles spoken of by Isaiah (Lx. 3, 6), the first of 'the kings of Sheba and Seba' who were in after ages to bring their gifts of gold and silver and cast them at the feet of Jesus, whose dominion was to be 'from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth'.

I shall do no more than speak of the one most obvious lesson from the picture we have had before us, of this great Prince of the olden time. It is this—seek, like Job, to *live in the fear of God*.

I should like to take you back for a moment to the opening verse of the whole book. How is he there described? Yes, as a 'perfect and an upright man'.

What a lovely character! *Upright*; that is truthful, honest, scorning to do an unfair or an unjust thing. In the beautiful words of Jesus spoken in a future age, his eye was 'single' and therefore his 'whole body was full of light'. Try to have in your young hearts the true 'ring of goodness'. What do I mean by that? Take a shilling, as I dare say you have often done, or seen others do, and cast it down on the table. It falls flat, with a dull, heavy, leaden sound. It is not true metal. The want of the clear ring as it spins to rest shows it to be false, not pure silver; only a piece of zinc, or iron, or tin. Take another coin of like appearance outwardly, and throw it on the same table. It makes a clear, sharp sound. You cannot mistake it. It is the right thing now: genuine silver. It has the *true ring* about it.

Is it not so with you? You are all outwardly and apparently the same. I can discern no differ-

ence between you. Perhaps your nearest and dearest friends may fail to discover, or at any rate for a time, any difference. But God, the All-Seeing and All-Searching, does. Some may be fondled and caressed, praised and commended as good boys or good girls; while conscience tells them they have not 'the clear ring' about them. They have done wrong, or are doing wrong; they are not happy. Others again are like the real silver coin I have described. With sincere and honest hearts they try to fear and serve God, and to be kind and loving to all around them. Their life is a strain of sweet music.

Oh, this is the only really valued and valuable wealth and riches. I feel sure Job sought such wealth above all other things for his children; 'a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man'. When you grow up, do not make it your great concern how many sheep or camels or oxen you may have; how much gold or silver, or houses or lands. Some people are always seeking after *greatness*. Let me never cease to tell you that it is far better to be good than to be great. Far better to be the poorest of the poor, with a good conscience, than the richest of the rich, with a conscience defiled and evil. Remember what Paul said, who had none of these boasted things I have just spoken of. He was a poor travelling missionary; yet possessing that true 'ring,' he could avow—'I have *all*, and abound'.

Thus living holy, in the fear of God, even if called at some aftertime of your lives, like Job, to suffer, you will be able to say as he said, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him'. The words afterwards sung by the Great Prophet of Israel were beautifully applicable in his case; they will remain true of all who, whether young or old, seek to please God; and, if not in this world, they will have a glorious meaning and reality in the world to come: 'He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly. . . . He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure' (Is. xxxiii. 15, 16).—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 58.

#### A QUESTION OF TASTE

'Is there any taste in the white of an egg?'—JOB VI. 6.

None whatever! There is *no* taste in the white of an egg. That is—if it is 'sound'. If it is a bit 'high,' however, there *is* a taste in it—and a nasty taste, too! We won't speak of that; 'tisn't pleasant. Eggs of that sort are not for eating; they are only good for contested elections, though I don't hold by them, even then!

Speaking of good, sound, healthy eggs, however, you have all noticed that there is no taste in the 'white'. There is in the yellow 'yolk'—but we are not speaking of it. I don't suppose there is one of you but has made the remark at the breakfast-table that there was no taste in the 'white,' and I have no doubt that you thought it was a very original observation. Yet here is a man who had said the same thing more than three thousand years ago! That is

discouraging; it always is discouraging to find your original remarks are only echoes of what somebody else has said long before. Not to be able to say even a thing like this without finding that it has been said before the Pyramids were built—this is enough to take the very heart out of genius. The only way I can think of for escaping these humblings is by never pretending to be original at all. But as it isn't given to everybody to be as wise as this, we must just put the best face on things we can.

Anyway, it is quite true that there is no taste in the white of an egg. If it were a mere matter of 'taste,' I would have nothing more to say about it, for everybody has his own taste like his own nose, different from everybody else's. You like one thing, I like another, and the boy round the corner likes something neither of us can bear. When it is only a question of taste in that fashion, there is no use arguing; everybody has his own.

But everybody is agreed about this. That's something. Now, what is the white of an egg? It is the chick's rations! Yes. It is something within the 'yolk' which makes the chick, and as soon as he gets a beak he begins, naturally, to feel peckish a bit, and so he makes for the 'white'. By the time he has eaten that up he has grown so big and so important that he disdains the world within the shell in which he was reared, and steps out into this larger world, and gets introduced to relations he hadn't had the pleasure of meeting before. Then he forgets all about the 'white,'—yet if it hadn't been for the white he would have died of starvation in the shell, as completely as ever an Arctic traveller died among the icebergs through want of food. It is too bad of him to forget; but it is the way of chickens.

The thing for us to notice is, that though the 'white' has no taste it has very great strength. It is food for the chick, and it is food for you and me. Everything that is needed to make bone and blood and feathers—or hair—is in the white of an egg. Yet it is tasteless! Then that shows, does it not? that there are things in the world that are very good for us even though they may not be as pleasant as sugar or as quick to be noticed as some of the medicines the doctor gives us! They are tasteless, but they are strengthening—that's the point—the first point at least.

The next point is this—the only way to find out how good these tasteless things are is by *taking* them. I have often seen the white of an egg exhibited in the chemistry class of a morning, and a great many wonderful things were done to show what it was made of, and how it was hardened, or softened, by this thing and that; but if any poor student had come there without his breakfast, he might have been made wiser, but he wouldn't have been made any stronger, by all he learnt. There is only one way of getting the strength that is in the white—and that is by eating it.

As I said, then, there are a great many things like it in this respect; they are tasteless, but good. There



is *duty*, for example. Not much taste about it! There is a fine smack about *pleasure*; merely to look on it is enough to make the mouth water; but *duty*! ah! there isn't much spice about it. To have to do the same thing over and over again just because it has to be done, and not because we like to do it, is very tasteless work. But what strong men and women it makes! There is nobody strong who shirks his duty, and there is nobody weak who has got into the habit of doing it. The best soldiers, the best sailors, the best men and women everywhere are those who have learnt to do their duty for duty's sake, and not because there is anything sweet about it to tempt them on. Whatever you ought to do, *do it*—just because you ought, and though it is as tasteless at first as the white of an egg, it will make you at last stronger than Samson.

Another very tasteless thing is—singing sweet songs to a saddened heart. Let me explain. Sometimes people become very sad; some one they have dearly loved has died, or they have been greatly disappointed, or some one has done them a wrong, and their hearts are heavy. They care nothing then for the sweetest songs. Everything they delighted in before becomes to them then as tasteless as the white of an egg. All the same they are the better for the songs and better for the sympathy. They don't feel it at the time, but yet it puts new strength into them; just as with the white of an egg. Speak kindly to the sorrowing, speak hopefully to the sad; though they don't seem to listen or care for what you say, yet they are all the better for it, and will be better for it still. Even sympathy and kindness can be tasteless at times; but they are always strengthening.

And there is *worship*. What a pity that should ever be tasteless! But sometimes it is. Sometimes a person finds no pleasure in going to God's House, hearing His Word, or singing His praises. Sometimes he has no pleasure even in praying! Think of that! How you would wonder at yourself if your heart didn't dance and your eyes didn't brighten when you met somebody you really loved! You would say, would you not? that there was something wrong with yourself then. You would, and you would be quite correct; and it is just the same with us all when we cease to find any pleasure in meeting with Jesus in worship or praise or prayer. The fault is in ourselves; we have lost our taste. People do so sometimes. When they are sick or ill or out of sorts there are many things they don't care for, of which they were very fond when they were in health. And the doctor tests them by it. He asks them from time to time, 'Can you take this yet?' or, 'Do you like that?' and so he knows whether they are getting better or getting worse. We can tell about our own hearts, our own spirits, in the same way. If we have no pleasure in meeting with Jesus, in praising Him or praying to Him, it is a sure sign there is something wrong with us. There is sin somewhere, and it is making the soul sick and weak. There is no hope for us then unless that sin is put away. Till that is

done we shall blame the worship, blame the praise, blame everything and everybody but ourselves; just as the sick man does when he has lost his taste. Yet the fault is in ourselves all the time!

Then, when you don't like to go to church, don't like to praise Jesus, don't like to pray to Him, just give a look into your own heart and you will find something wicked there. Put that away; ask Jesus to pardon it, and the things that seemed so tasteless before will be found to be very pleasant, and, what is more, they will be found to be very strengthening, like the white of an egg. Water is tasteless when you are not thirsty, and bread has no flavour when you are not hungry, but how sweet water is when your tongue is parched! and how toothsome bread is when you are ready to perish! There is no spice like hunger and thirst. When you come to Jesus bring the hunger and thirst with you, and I promise—nay, Jesus promises—you shall be abundantly satisfied.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 101.

#### SMALL BEGINNINGS, GREAT ENDINGS

'Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.'—JOB VIII. 7.

WHEN you do anything, or when you say anything, or when you think anything, or when you feel anything, it all goes to make, what? A habit. Some people say, 'Oh, I have done it, and there's an end of it'. Not in the least. It never is so. It goes on to make a habit. Do you understand me?

Suppose you had a number of little, tiny threads; and you took one little thread and wove it; and another, and another, till you made a strong belt, so strong that nothing could break it; now everything you say, or feel, or do, or think, is woven together, and goes to make a strong belt.

Or supposing you were to draw a little line with a pen, and at the end of the line put a little dot, and another, and another, and go on putting a number of dots till they reached, oh! I cannot say how far; so everything you say is a little dot to the line going on and on unto eternity, never stopping.

Yes, everything you say, or do, or think, or feel, is like a little thread or dot, adding on and on, for ever.

Can you think in the Bible of any little boys or girls who did that? I am only now going to tell you of good ones—I might tell you about naughty ones—but I am, to-day, only going to tell you about good ones.

There was a little boy in the Bible who used to be very good and kind to his brothers—took messages to them; and when he grew up to be a man God made him so great a man that he saved the lives of his brothers. So the little messages he took in his early life formed the habit of being kind to his brothers.

Another little boy opened the doors of the church in the morning—that was almost all he could do; and when he grew up to be a man God let him do many holy things—he anointed a king, and many great things, because he liked when a boy to do little things.

Another little boy, when keeping sheep, fought with a lion and a bear; afterwards he fought all kinds of people—he fought a great giant, and killed him—many armies, and destroyed them. He began with little things, and God helped him to become a great man.

Another little boy had a good mother and grandmother—he became a great man—but began, when a very little boy, to love the Bible. God afterwards made him a great man.

But there was one little boy better than all—a perfect boy; and when He was twelve years old He liked to do His Father's work; and He did nothing but His Father's business. He formed the habit by commencing with little duties.

Little beginnings, great endings—'Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase'. It is God's will now with everything—to begin small, and to go on till it gets great?

But it was not always His rule—not when He made the world. When the first tree was made I suppose it was made at first a fine, great tree. When the first man was made—he was not first a little child—his body was at first as fine as ever it was, and His mind also. Adam was perfect at once. But the second Adam was not.

Do you know who the second Adam was? Christ. Christ was not. He was once a little, tiny babe—and His body grew and His mind grew. We are to be like Christ—to grow. Everything is to grow. Things begin so 'small' and get, oh, so big!

About seventy years ago, perhaps rather more, Dr. Franklin in America found out that the lightning up in the skies is the same thing as what we call 'electricity' down in the earth, and people said to him, 'What is the use of what you have found out?' and tried to laugh at him for it. 'I will tell you what is the use of it,' said he; and this was his answer—'What is the use of a little child becoming a man?' A little after, Dr. Galvani's wife (in France) was cooking a frog for her husband's dinner—the frog was dead, and it touched some metals, and the frog jumped; she told her husband—he thought a great deal about it—he was a philosopher, and he reasoned upon it—that was in the year 1791; in the year 1794 a clever Italian, Dr. Volta, carried on the discovery, and made a battery. And now what do you think is the most wonderful thing in the world? I think the electric telegraph—and this originated from Dr. Franklin's discovery of the lightning—the frog touched by the metal, and Dr. Volta's battery. Small beginnings—great endings.

But I am going to talk about something much more important than electric telegraphs—I mean, little 'beginnings' in your heart; they will lead to great ends. Do you know religion begins in the heart? I mean, how a person begins to become really religious; to love God and be good to men and women? How do they begin? Do you know who begins it? Do they begin it? No. Who then? Think.

The Holy Spirit always. And does He begin, generally, in a great way? Does He do some great thing? No, usually a very 'small' thing, you can hardly think how 'small'—what a little thing He does first! It is like a little voice such as Samuel heard, or a little, tiny silken thread drawing the heart, or some little feeling drawing the soul. You must look out for these little things, or you will miss them.

Everything depends on how you treat these little things. If you trifle with them they'll go. But if you try to obey them that is the way you will become a Christian, a useful one. But you must take great pains to look out for these little voices, whispers, calls; for that is the beginning of the Holy Spirit's work. I am going to tell you about some of them, if you like; because remember, nothing can be so important as to know how we begin to be God's people.

And if you feel these little things in your heart, remember it is God 'beginning' to lead on to a great end.

Now I think that the first thing I should mention is, when persons feel in their own hearts about their sins, a little feeling of their own sinfulness. I wonder whether you have ever felt it. I do not mean that you have felt unhappy because you have grieved your father and mother; but whether you have ever felt unhappy because you have grieved God, whether you have a sense of sin in your own heart. Can you think of some persons in the Bible with whom it began?

Josiah was a very good boy. What is said about him? Read 2 Chronicles xxxiv. 27, 'Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God'. Now that is just the feeling, to feel very soft, almost cry, because we have grieved God. This is a sure 'beginning'.

Do you remember when David did a little thing once—we should almost have said it was a good thing—he could have killed Saul, but he did not, he only cut off a bit of his dress; his heart smote him because he had done it to the king, the Lord's anointed. His was a tender heart!

In the fifth chapter of Luke we read about Peter; some think that this is really the time when Peter first began to be a Christian. He was in a boat, and said to Christ, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord'. He began to feel his sins. There was what I mean, God's good Spirit had put it into his heart to feel his sins, that he had grieved God.

I will tell you about another little boy, not in the Bible, His name was Samuel—not the little Samuel in the Bible. One day he had done something wrong—I don't know what it was, I don't want to know—he had grieved his dear father, who was a clergyman, and his father had put him out of the room; presently little Samuel came back, saying, 'Oh, papa, I can't get on with my lessons till you forgive me. I am very sorry I have done wrong. Give me a sign that you have forgiven me. Kiss me.' 'Yes,' said

the father, 'I forgive you instantly.' 'Now, papa, I can do my Latin and Greek with anybody, since you have forgiven me.' He began to run out of the room.

'Stop a moment,' said his father. 'Remember you have a heavenly Father—have you asked His forgiveness?' 'Yes, papa, I went to Him first. I went to my room, knelt down, and asked Him to forgive me, and I think He has.' The father writes, it was the only time he ever was grieved about his son; from that time he became a Christian boy, and he never had any cause of sorrow for him. That sense of sin was the little 'beginning'. I wonder whether you have had that 'beginning'? Pray for it. Ask the Holy Spirit to give it you.

I will now go on to another thing—it is something like the first, but not quite. It is when we begin to feel a battle inside our hearts, a struggle—something good and something naughty. They seem to fight. At last we get the victory over something. I believe that is a sure 'beginning' when boys or girls begin to feel a struggle in their own hearts; because by nature people feel no struggle—but when the struggle begins, it is a sure sign there is something good going on: for you would never know when it was dark, if you had never seen light! So God said to Adam and Eve—'I will put enmity'—a struggle, it's a sign for good.

There was a very good man who died a short time ago, who was once bishop of Bombay—Dr. Carr. He was not born quite a gentleman. When a boy he lived in Leeds—he went to a manufactory there. They did not, however, do everything quite honourably there, and once they told young Carr to write a letter which he considered rather dishonourable. Young Carr said, 'I can't do it.' They said, 'It is madness to refuse; you are clerk, and will be raised to a partnership—you have no money of your own—you are poor—but you will become rich if you stay with us'. 'I can't do it,' he said.

He left them, and a clergyman in the neighbourhood hearing of it put him to school, and to complete his education sent him to college—and he became a clergyman and a bishop. 'They that honour Me,' says God, 'I will honour.' All began with that struggle in his own heart and conscience. It was a little 'beginning', it came to a great end; for he not only was a bishop, but became a good, useful man. Everybody loved him—that was the way he began.

I will tell you about one more of these little 'beginnings'. A little boy once slept in a room with some peers; he did not touch them, because they were not his. Afterwards some boys said to him, 'Why did you not pocket some?' No one would have seen you. 'Yes' said he, 'God would have seen me.' So he conquered himself; and he further said, 'I will never do anything in my life that I should not like to see myself'. That was a noble resolve. Remember it.

Now I will go on to another thing—beginning to

feel a little pleasure in good things. Some children do not like going to church—reading their Bibles they think stupid and dull—and they only do it because they must. I am afraid in such the 'beginning' has not taken place. When a boy or girl finds a pleasure in these things then there is a nice 'beginning'.

There was a very pious young lady who died some time ago; a relative of hers told me this: she was looking very beautiful as she lay dying—she asked for her box of jewels—they were very splendid—she had them all laid upon her bed—her friends were around; she distributed them—diamonds, precious stones, gold and silver—as remembrances. When she had given them all away she called her husband to her side, and taking her Bible said to him, 'I give you this—my jewel of jewels—oh! that I could give with this Bible all the comfort and all the peace this Gospel has been to me!'

At a Deaf and Dumb Institution some time ago, the master said to all the children, 'Write down on your slates what is the happiest thing'. One child wrote 'Joy'; the next, 'Hope'; a third, 'Love'; another, 'Gratitude'; the next wrote down 'Repentance'—it was a little girl who wrote it—and there was a tear in her eye. Her teacher said, 'My dear, this is not a happy feeling—how can you write down repentance as being the happiest thing?' She wrote, 'I think it is—there is nothing so happy in the world as to be humble in God's sight'. This is quite true. I believe in the order in which I have put them; you might place the happy feelings. There is nothing happier than real repentance.

Now one thing more—when we try to be useful, when you begin to be religious, you will want to do good things, if even you are only five years old. I never knew anybody become really religious who did not wish somebody else to be happy, and to love God.

In Cornwall there is a lighthouse at some distance from the land. There lived here a man, his wife, and their little daughter. One day the man and his wife went on shore in a boat, and wicked people, called 'wreckers,' kept them there, hoping thereby that some vessel might be dashed to pieces through the light not being lit in the lighthouse. The little girl was left alone; 'twas a dangerous place to get up to light the lamp, but she had forethought and courage to go to the top of the very high building, for she thought truly if the lamps were not lighted some ships might be lost!

This is what you ought to do. Light the lights! Show a light! What light? Do you remember what Christ says, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven'.

Those are the four little 'beginnings,' will you remember them? to feel our sins, to have a struggle in our hearts, and by God's help to get a victory over some besetting sin, to feel a pleasure in good things, and to try to do good to somebody.



You may say, 'Do you think God will notice those little feelings in our hearts? Will He care about them?' Oh, yes, He will, as much, I may say more, perhaps, than He cares about an archangel's service.

I could give you a great many proofs from the Bible as to how He cares about 'little' things. In Zechariah, He says, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' And He said about children, 'If any man despise these little ones, it were better for him if he had never been born'. I am sure God won't despise 'little things' in any child.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### THE SPIDER

'The hypocrite's hope shall perish, . . . whose trust shall be a spider's web.'—JOB VIII. 13, 14.

TURNING to the spider itself, we may learn various lessons.

**I. Its Skill as a Weaver.**—Like Hogarth's good apprentice, it has made admirable use of its trade. Its web, however frail, is really a marvellous production. It is distinguished by beauty of design, fineness of texture, nicety and sensitiveness of touch, reminding us of Pope's couplet—

The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine,  
Feels at each thread and lives along the line.

And when we add to this that the whole fabric is spun out of its own body—a part of its very life—it is not difficult to see that the spider's work must be of the finest order, and well worthy of the study and imitation of every young apprentice.

Every lad in going forward to the work of his life should set up a high ideal. In all that he does he ought to aim at perfection. Like the spider's web his work, whatever it is, should be a bit of himself—steeped in his own thought and shaped by his own effort. He may only be a weaver, but he must aspire to be a *good* one—one who plans as well as labours, and reads as well as plans. For in the race of life muscle is no match for mind, and skill will always outstrip slovenliness—just as the great Goliath must go down before the alert son of Jesse, and the pigmies of the African forest can easily outmatch and outmanœuvre the lion. Let every young life go and examine the perfection of the spider's web, and seek to do likewise.

**II. Its Prowess as a Hunter.**—Popular prejudice has always been against the spider; and it must be admitted that there is a good deal to sanction the poet's unfavourable verdict when he says regarding it—

Cunning and fierce, mixture abhor'd.

Its cunning and craft have passed into a proverb; and all the children know that its apparent treachery, in decoying the little fly into its parlour, has been suitably expressed in verse. Its fierceness also is quite equal to its cunning, and when the thought of its hairy-looking appearance is added to the fact of the poison-fangs which it buries in the bodies of its victims, there would seem to be enough to warrant the general dislike with which the spider has at all times been regarded.

On the other hand we must not forget these two things: (1) That the spider is only fulfilling the instinct which an allwise God has implanted in it; and (2) that it is of great service to man in diminishing the swarms of insects by which he is molested. Thomas Edward, the Banffshire naturalist, calculated that a single pair of swallows would destroy 282,000 insects in one year while rearing their two broods, and sometimes they rear three. And if this be the service rendered by a single pair of birds, what may not be accomplished by those innumerable spiders that weave their gummy webs on every bush and hedgerow, and spend the entire day, and sometimes the whole night, in trapping and ridding the atmosphere of those annoying pests. Bereft of these wily hunters we should be like the Egyptians in the time of Moses—plagued and eaten up of flies; so that in spite of prejudice and general dislike the spider is occupying a real sphere of usefulness in the world. And so may we. We can afford at times to pause and study the hunter's skill, and do something to imitate its prowess.

**III. Its Fame as a Teacher.**—It teaches us how to spin and how to weave, how to hunt and how to snare. And as one has expressed it, it has solved many a problem in mathematics before Euclid was born. Look at the spider's web and see whether 'any hand of man, with all the fine appliances of art, and twenty years' apprenticeship to boot, could weave us such another'. Nay, if we think of the *water-spider* which bottles up air and takes it under water to breathe with, it is not too much to say that if people had but 'watched water-spiders as Robert Bruce watched the cottage spider, diving-bells would have been discovered hundreds of years ago, and people might have learnt how to go to the bottom of the sea and save the treasures of wrecks'.

The name of King Robert the Bruce suggests one special lesson. If all history be true the spider will always be known in Scotland as the teacher of *perseverance*—

If at first you don't succeed,  
Try, try, try again.

And little do children in any age think how great an influence *they* might wield, if only in devotion to what is right they would follow and obey Christ's Gospel. Many a tiny seed has grown into a great tree. And Jesus Himself has said, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise' (Matt. xxi. 16).—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 83.

### WHY DOES GOD SEND TROUBLES?

'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'—JOB XIII. 15.

PERHAPS you have sometimes been perplexed as you have thought of the many tears which are shed in a world made by a God of love. It is not the thing, you think, God should do, to let people cry so, and even to make them cry, if He is kind and careful for His creatures' good, as the Saviour says He is. It is certainly not the way *you* would do.

And I do not deny the truth of such thoughts, nor do I profess to fully understand how it comes about that this world is so full of pain. But one thing is certain, God never causes us a needless pain, and all the world will one day know it too. Then all nations, peoples, and tongues will clap their hands and be glad, and shout aloud for joy that God did just what He did; and those very ways of His which brought us sorrow our grateful hearts shall rank as His most golden deeds.

Let me illustrate what I mean by a story of the mutiny in India. The Indian Mutiny was the rising of a lot of desperate men, with swords and guns, against the authority of the Queen. They imprisoned and slaughtered her officers wherever they could, and even their wives and children; and the only safety for anybody who happened to be an Englishman was to fly to some place of safety beyond their reach. On the day of the rising of these cruel, savage men in one place, there was a little child who had been left in the charge of her Indian nurse, father and mother being from home; and unless she could be got away she would be put to death, for she had a white skin, and was the child of an officer of the Queen. She was three years old. In this place, too, were other officers, and these, when danger had come and all must fly, at once thought of their absent comrade's child in its loneliness, and without a second's delay one of them galloped to her home, dismounted, rushed into the room where she was at play with her dark-skinned Indian nurse, seized her, hurried back to his horse, and mounting put her before him, holding her on the horse's neck.

By this time the street was filled with men who rushed at the flying officer to seize his horse, and stop and kill both him and that English child. But the brave man, with a strong arm and a trusty sword, cut them down, fighting every inch of his way, and holding the child fast on the horse's neck. But oh! the trouble that child gave the brave man. From the first she kicked and struggled and shrieked; and again and again she had almost wriggled herself out of his arms. Every moment it seemed as if she must wriggle herself free and fall. But in spite of struggles and screams and tears, with one arm clinging firmly to her, with the other cutting his way bravely through opposing men, after a long, hard ride, her brave protector delivered her safe into her thankful mother's arms. Yet there, even, no entreaties could make her kiss him. He had hurt her, he had! She shrank from him in genuine dislike. She almost hated him. 'Friend! How could he be a friend?' thought the simple child. He had stolen her from her nurse, broken up her pleasant game, and given her such a crush with his hard arm, such a shaking on the bare neck of his horse as no friend, she was sure, could ever think of doing. Kiss and thank him! Her genuine little heart could do no such thing. She would not forgive nor even look at him, and timidly shrank from his touch.

Such was a child's view of her delivering friend.

She had no faith in a man who could cause her such pain. But though that child could not see, you can see, can't you, that the captain was her friend, her true friend? And some day, when she was old enough to understand, you are sure that she would see this too, and then she would no longer call him unkind; she would feel how deeply kind he had been, and would even thank him for all the foolish tears he caused her, and all the needful pain he had given her in that dreadful ride. One thing only would she regret, not that she was joggled about so dreadfully in that long, dangerous ride, but that she had ever thought ill of her friend, and refused to thank him for his love—refused to kiss the hand that saved her.

Now, may we not be like that little girl when we grumble at the tears we have to shed and the pain we have to suffer? This at least is quite certain—like her we are very young. Speaking in the light of our long future we were 'born yesterday and know nothing'. Of those who have lived longest, Jesus says they must be saved as 'little children,' trusting not in their own knowledge of things, but in His love; for of their eternal life not one man in all the world has yet passed his childhood, and of the eternal world we know nothing, just as that screaming, struggling child knew nothing of the Indian Mutiny and of the great dangers which surrounded her tiny life.

Then, again, we are like her, too, in this—we are being saved. God is saving us—saving His little children who cannot understand, and who like pleasure and do not see danger. If we weep, as did that little girl—if we struggle and scream, and would do anything to rid ourselves of this kind control, He does not let us have our own way; for He knows too well that we are not fit to have it—we are too simple, and young, and ignorant. He is quite willing to be grumbled at to-day, knowing that one of these days we shall see how foolish we have been; and when the painful ride is over we shall understand what we do not and cannot now—that God is love, and all His ways are loving too.

So now, while the rough ride with its pains and tears lasts, let us give up struggling and murmuring against His ways, and bravely stand the pain He gives us. Let us have faith in God; say, God would not, God could not, do all this if it was not for our good. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'—BENJAMIN WAUGH, *Sunday Evenings with My Children*, p. 283.

### DROPS AND ROCKS

'The waters wear the stones.'—JOB XIV. 19.

WHAT is weaker than a drop of water? What is stronger than a rock? It is a common proverb, if we wish to describe immovable strength, to say, 'as firm as a rock'; or if we would describe weakness, 'weak as water'. Catch a drop of rain in your hand. Though perhaps it has fallen from a mile high, it will not hurt a baby's hand, it is so soft. As the warm sunshine rests on it, silently it dries up and is gone.

Now pick up a pebble. If that were to fall upon you from as high up in the air as the rain-drop, it would kill you. Look at a great boulder of grey rock as it lies on the moor. If you were to dash your hand against it, you would draw it back bruised and bleeding. If a cannon-ball struck it, perhaps a few splinters would fly off, but the rock would fling back the cannon-ball as easily as you would fling back a cricket-ball in play. Does it not seem very unlikely that soft, weak water-drops can ever make any impression on hard rocks? Yet the Bible says, 'The waters wear the stones'. And so they do.

Pick up the hardest pebble you can find on the seashore, granite or topaz or rock-crystal. Your sharpest knife will not scratch it. You may hammer away a long time with all your might, but you will not break it. But how did it come into that shape, so rounded and smooth? Once it was a ragged chip of rock, all edges and corners. But the sea waves and currents rolled it about, as if in play, for thousands and thousands of years, rubbing and grinding it against other pebbles till it grew shapely and polished as you see it now. Examine the cliffs by the seashore, and the rocky ledges over which the waves break in foam, and you will find that they have been worn into curious shapes, and sometimes hollowed into deep caves, by the dashing surges. Or look at some waterfall among the mountains, and you will find that the hard rock has been worn smooth by the continual pouring of the water over it. Often, too, the tiny rain-drops trickle into cracks in the rock, and by slow degrees wash away the earth behind and underneath it; till at last the rock is loosened, and falls with a mighty crash. In some places, a whole mountain-side has thus been loosened, and has slid down into the valley, carrying houses along with it, or burying them under it. Thus, as Job says:—

The mountain falling cometh to nought,  
And the rock is removed out of its place.  
The waters wear the stones.

I. And first, as *the waters wear the stones*, they teach us a lesson of **Perseverance**. They write upon the rocks a parable of patient diligence. Question them—How can you, soft, feeble, tiny drops of water make any impression on the hard stones? They answer, 'By *keeping always at it*. That is our secret. We never give up. Slow hard work it is, to be sure; so slow and hard that days and weeks pass, and we seem to have done nothing. Years pass, and you can hardly see our work. But we stick to it. We are never weary. And at last we conquer. *The waters wear the stones.*'

Some people want to do everything at a dash. They cannot bear patient plodding. They are splendid at the first go off. They are like a racer who at starting takes the lead, and distances all his rivals; but he lacks what is called 'staying power'. By degrees his breath and his legs begin to fail him; the other racers, little by little, steadily overtake him, and he comes in last of all. If the waters made a

great dash at the rock, they would make a huge noise and commotion and split themselves into spray; but it is only by keeping always at it that little by little they wear the rock away.

I do not forget that some things have to be done with a dash if they are to be done at all. But the power to do them was gained by slow steady plodding. You might see a skilful painter, when a glorious sunset is lighting up the summer sky, hastily take out his sketch-book and paint-box, and little tin water-bottle, and dash the colours on his paper as if by magic. Before the sky has time to fade, there is a lovely little picture—orange sky, and crimson clouds, and dark trees, and brook foaming among the rocks, and reflecting in a quiet pool the colours of the sky. Ask the painter how he has gained the power to make that picture so rapidly; and he will tell you—not by *dashing* at everything and doing it as quick as possible, but by patient work and dogged diligence, sticking to his work through many a tedious hour, drawing and rubbing out, and drawing again, till at last painting has grown as easy to him as talking.

One day, a good many years ago, an officer was riding along a road which ran near the brink of a frightful precipice. Suddenly a carriage filled with people came tearing furiously down the hill. The horses had taken fright, and the driver in vain pulled with all his might to stop them. In another minute, horses, carriage, and people would have rolled over the precipice. But the officer drew a pistol from his saddle, galloped alongside, and shot one of the horses dead, and so stopped the carriage just in time. The people were no doubt shaken and hurt, but their lives were saved. Now that was a thing which had to be done in a moment, or it could not have been done at all. Suppose a minute afterwards the officer had said to himself, 'Oh, I have a pistol; I might have shot one of the horses!' it would have been too late. But if you had asked him, How did you come by that presence of mind, and coolness, and courage, which enabled you in an instant to do the only thing that could save those people? he would have told you, not by galloping about firing off pistols, or by making brilliant dashes at things and doing everything in a hurry, but by tedious drill, strict and prompt obedience to orders, learning day by day to think not about himself but about his duty, and punctually and faithfully to do it.

So you see, as I said, there are some things which must be done at a stroke, on the spur of the moment, or the opportunity is gone for ever. But the eye to see what is to be done, the skill to aim the stroke, the strength to give it, the coolness and courage to be as steady and self-possessed at the moment as if you had plenty of time to spare, these can come only by slow patient, persevering work, like that with which *the waters wear the stones*.

And it is only a few things, now and then, that need to be done thus suddenly. Most of the work of our daily life is such that patient perseverance counts for more than brilliant cleverness; so that the



race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but to those who stick to their purpose and never give in.

II. 'The waters' as they 'wear the stones' may teach us a **Parable of Life**. They may remind us what little things may in time do great mischief.

Not a few homes, I am afraid, could be found, in which it would pay to have this motto—'The waters wear the stones'—put up in golden letters, if only everybody would learn its lessons. They seem to lack nothing that is needed for a happy home. The parents are well-to-do, educated, sensible people, anxious for the welfare of their children. The children have good health, good abilities, good education, abundant means of enjoyment. Yet the home is not a happy one. Why not? Do they not love one another? Yes, in a sort. If one of the boys broke his leg, all his sisters would stay at home to nurse him. If one of the sisters died, the whole family would be in deep grief. What is amiss? Only this, that they have none of them learned how much both the happiness and the unhappiness of life depend on *little things*. None of them has learned to give up in little things. None of them can refrain from a little ill-natured joke, a little sharp answer, that cuts like a pen-knife, or pricks like a needle. Little opportunities for a kind action, a kind word, a kind look, slip by continually. And so, because life is mostly made up of little things, the happiness of home is bit by bit destroyed, even as 'the waters wear the stones'.

III. The water-worn rock, with the furrows and channels which the water has so slowly but deeply carved, teaches us another parable, a **Parable of Character**.

Do you understand what is meant by 'character'? You ought, for it is the most important thing about anybody. A person's *character* means *what sort of person* he is. Don't you know some boys or girls of whom if anyone told you they had told a lie, or done some mean, cruel, dishonest thing, you would say 'I can't believe that; it isn't like him!' And there are others of whom you would say 'I can easily believe it; it is just like him'. It is his character. Some people are so stiff in their opinion or determined on having their own way that you can no more persuade them than you can bend an iron poker. Others are so easily persuaded that they are like reeds, blown this way and that by every breeze. It is their character. Some people have a character for unpunctuality; they are always a little behindhand. Other people are always in time; nobody ever knew them come late to church, or miss a train, or be the last down to breakfast. Punctuality is part of their character. And we find that people are very apt to keep through life the character they form when they are boys and girls. Often you may hear it said: 'Ah! I remember him at school. He is just the same now as he used to be.'

Now, how is this? Partly because we are *born* different. No two babies are exactly alike. But chiefly our character depends on the habits we form.

What are 'habits'? Habits are the ways we get into of behaving, or speaking, or thinking and feeling. There are good habits and bad habits. And how do these habits grow? Little by little, as *the waters wear the stones*.

Another thing water sometimes does, quite as wonderful as wearing the stones away, *making stones grow*. At Knaresborough, in Yorkshire, there is what is called 'The Dropping Well'. At the foot of a rock that hangs over like a pent-house is a pool into which the water does not pour over the rock, but soaks through from above and comes dropping down like rain. Here you may see many curious things which all seem made of stone. Here is a stone bird's nest, with four eggs in it. Once a bird built that nest of soft moss and lined it with soft hair and feathers. The eggs lay there fresh and full of life; if the bird had sat on them they would have been hatched and little birds would have come forth to soar in the air and sing among the trees. Now all is hard, cold, dead. Here, again, is a stone book. Once it was a real book. Perhaps in it were charming stories, sweet hymns, beautiful pictures. Now all is sealed up in stone. It can never be opened again. How is this? Those tiny drops of water have done it all. Catch some of them in a wine-glass; the water looks clear and sparkling. Drink some; you taste nothing in it. Yet in every drop of that water there is dissolved a little portion of rock—so little that the strongest microscope could not show it; and as the water drops on the nest, or the book, or anything else put there to be 'petrified,' it leaves a little invisible film of stone. Little by little the stony coating grows; till at last nothing but stone is to be seen. The people at the well take away the petrified nest, or book, or pen, or cricket-ball, and put something else in its place. 'Petrifying,' or 'petrification' means turning to stone.

The sinner's heart is 'past feeling' (Eph. iv. 19), cold, hard, dead, petrified; a *stony heart*.

How did it come about? Little by little evil habits grew; the habit of neglecting prayer, of neglecting God's word, of making jokes about holy things, of careless ungodliness, of love of the world; perhaps habits of dishonesty, or of intemperance, or of other deadly sins, and 'foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition' (1 Tim. vi. 9). Alas! Is there no hope, no remedy? Our merciful Saviour answers, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible' (Mark x. 27). If even the hardened sinner, who has lost all good and right and tender feeling, and whose evil habits bind him like chains, would turn to God in earnest prayer, God would fulfil to him the wonderful promise He gave to the Jews of old:—

A new heart will I give you;  
And a new spirit will I put within you.  
And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh;  
And I will give you a heart of flesh.

—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 1.

## OUR MOTHER THE WORM

‘I have said . . . to the worm, Thou art my mother.’—JOB XVII. 14.

I AM sure you will say this is a strange text and cannot teach us much that will be helpful, but I trust you will be agreeably disappointed, for these words are full of great meanings. We know what they meant on the lips of Job. He was in the depths of despair because of all that he had suffered in body and in mind, and he felt so low and dispirited that he thought he might actually claim relationship with the worms. A worm stood, in his eyes, for all that was despised and worthless and mean, and he had been so afflicted by the hand of God that he could utter these words of utter humiliation—‘I have said to the worm, Thou art my mother’. Can we imagine a man lower than this, more abject in his feeling of degradation? We know Job did not mean these words to be understood literally; it was only what we call a figure of speech to express as clearly as possible how miserable he felt. But what would you say if I were to insist that his words are true in a very real sense, and that you and I as well as Job can say to this despised little creature ‘Thou art my mother?’ In one sense we owe our life to our mother; she gave us birth; and in another sense we owe it to the worm we speak of with so much contempt. What I am to try and do now is to show you how true it is, that if it were not for the worms that move in the earth we could never live, and if we manage to prove this then we can repeat these words of Job in a way that even he never dreamed of.

It is true that in all ages and among every race the worm has been regarded as the type of all that was low and contemptible. In the Bible this is very clearly seen. If you turn up its many references to the worm you will always find it speaks of it as a creature to be despised and avoided. What is a serpent but a big worm; and what does the serpent stand for in the Bible? It stands for sin; and in the awful pictures we have of the place where sin is punished we find ‘the worm that never dies’ as the symbol of the dreadful consequences of sin. Turn where you will in the Word of God, you will not find a good word said about the poor worm, because, in those days, no one realised the good a worm could do.

Now this feeling with regard to worms has prevailed throughout the world down to our own day, but in the year 1881 something happened which changed for ever our low opinion about this creature. And what do you think that was? Why, just the publication of a book devoted to the subject of worms. Who would ever have thought they were worthy of a man’s study and of the labour that a book entailed? Yet so it was.

Some of you have heard of that great man of science, Charles Darwin, who has done so much to throw light on the wonderful way in which God works in the making of the world and of every creature that lives in it. He has done more than

any man to increase our wonder at the marvels of growth, and the meaning of it, and to increase our reverence for the God who rules and controls all the processes of the world of Nature. And one of the best things he has done is to show us how God uses the little worm as one of His great instruments for sustaining the life of man on the earth. For forty years Darwin studied these creatures. All that time, with marvellous patience and keen insight, he was watching them, noting their habits and the work they did. He kept them in flower-pots in his home that he might watch them day and night, he got his friends to watch them too and tell him what they had seen, and he sent to his naturalist friends all over the world requests for information about the habits of the worms in their own countries, in India, America, Australia, and through all Europe. Just think of what a change in the attitude of men to the worm this signified—the foremost men of science of the time all engaged in studying its habits. Then in 1881 Darwin published his book ‘Earth-worms,’ and for the first time we understood all that we owed to these creatures we had hitherto regarded with contempt. Then we understood that were it not for them life would be impossible on the earth, and that Job had given utterance to a great truth when he called the worm his mother. We speak of the earth as the mother of us all, but the earth could not support a living thing were it not for the worms that break it up and make it fit to sustain all that lives in it and on it.

What do worms do? What use are they in the earth?

To put it generally, I would say they enable every living thing to grow. Take the case of any plant that grows in the ground. The greater part of its food it takes up by means of its roots which go down into the soil. But suppose that the soil were as dry and hard as a piece of iron, what would happen to the poor plant? Why, it could not draw a single atom of food from the ground and would die. Now the little worm as it bores its way through the ground breaks it up, lets the refreshing rain get into the soil and so moisten the roots; it grinds down the earth itself as we break down food for the little folks in order that the plant may take it in: it brings down decayed leaves and other matter which acts as manure for the plant; and it throws up to the surface the earth which has passed through its body and which is now rich in material for the nourishment of every green thing. Although they are small they are very numerous. Darwin tells us that there are over fifty thousand of them to the acre of ground, and that, in the course of a year, these busy little workers will lay about ten tons of fresh soil over every acre.

Surely Job was wiser than he knew when he said to the worm, ‘Thou art my mother’. Is there not a very real sense in which this is true? Do we not, under the wise working of God, owe our very life to these humble creatures? Is there not a lesson here for us in our pride and seeming independence that on

the work of these little instruments of God our life depends?

Let us now sum up what we have been saying about the worm by emphasising two plain lessons it teaches us.

First of all it bears witness to the significance of common things.

We begin by pointing out how, for centuries, the worm had been regarded as so common and despised a creature as to be beneath the notice of anyone unless it was needed, as Job needed it, as a symbol for abasement. We end up by finding that this commonplace reptile is one of the most important creatures God has made. What a mistake the world has been making for all these years! But how do we know that this is the only mistake that has been made about commonplace things? How do we know that there are no works of God lying at our very feet that might rouse us to worship and adoration if we only understood their place and meaning in the great world of nature? Pliny in his *Natural History* says, 'Let not things because they are common enjoy for that the less share of our consideration'. That sounds in itself a very commonplace remark; but it is a profound truth to all students of Nature. But it is true, not merely in the sphere of science, but for all who try to understand the way of God in the world of daily life and experience; and there is no truth we are so apt to forget. Let me tell you a story to show what a wrong point of view the most of us have with regard to so-called common things, whether they be actual works of God or experiences of life.

Some years ago a steamer going from New York to Liverpool was burned on the voyage. A boat-load of passengers succeeded in leaving the ship and were saved, and among them was a minister belonging to Dublin. When he returned from his ill-omened voyage he was the hero of the hour, and told his thrilling story far and near with great effect. He used to dwell especially on the signal mark of God's favour and mercy he had received in being picked out from among so many and saved from death. It was a marvellous and special providence that had so cared for him and preserved him. He never told his story without dwelling on this aspect of it, the uncommon mercy of God, as he might have called it. One day he was recounting his strange experience to a company of people among whom was the great Archbishop Whately. When he came to the end and made the usual remarks about the extraordinary providence that had snatched him from the burning ship and spared his life, Whately turned to him and said: 'A wonderful occurrence! A great and signal mercy indeed! But I think I can surpass the wonder of it with an incident from my own experience.' Everybody pricked up his ears and listened for the passage in the Archbishop's life which should show a yet more marvellously merciful escape than that of this minister from the the burning ship. Whately went on in the expressive manner for which he was celebrated: 'Not three months ago I sailed in the packet from Holyhead

to Kingstown, and—a pause, while the Archbishop took a copious pinch of snuff; and his hearers were on the tip-toe of expectation—and, by God's mercy, the vessel never caught fire at all. 'Think of that, my friend.'

You see the moral of such a story as this. The Dublin minister did well to marvel at the goodness of God in saving his life in such a remarkable manner; but Whately did better in reminding him that it is not in the outstanding and remarkable experiences of life alone that we may trace the finger of God, but in the common mercies of our common day.

II. The other lesson I should like to emphasise is, the power of small things.

What a frail, soft creature the worm is. How easily you can crush it. How unfit it seems for the work it has to do in the hard, unyielding earth. And yet what a work it does! And we have seen only a very small part of it after all, but we have surely seen enough to convince us that God can use very small and humble means to reach His great ends in the world. As an eloquent preacher said: 'The world's Ruler defeated Pharaoh with frogs and flies; He humbled Israel with the grasshopper; He smeared the splendour of Herod with worms; on the plains of Russia He broke the power of Napoleon with a snowflake. God has no need to despatch an archangel; when once He is angry a microbe will do.' In another of his books this same preacher emphasises this lesson from the point of view of what man can do. He says: 'The modest daisy was sufficient theme to secure for Burns a place amid the immortals; a single string stretched on a wooden shoe was all that Paganini needed to demonstrate the master minstrel; and a bit of canvas, a few inches square, was ample to testify to all generations that Raphael was the prince of painters'.

A sermon is not of much use unless it has a practical application. What practical point is there here that one might apply to one's small hearers? Surely it is the power, the great, unknown power that dwells even in such as you. The greatest men that ever lived began life just in the same way as you begin it, with the same childish weaknesses and follies, and at an early age probably showed very little signs of future greatness. How are we to know that in our midst we may not have in the person of a little child, perhaps your companion, perhaps yourself, another of the great ones of the earth? We cannot tell; all we know is that from seemingly weak and insignificant persons and things have come most of the great achievements that have won the admiration of the world.—J. THOMSON, *The Six Gates*, p. 131.

#### CEASE YOUR QUARREL

'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come to thee.—JOB XXII. 21.

I. God and the Fallen Soul are out of Friendly Acquaintanceship.—When God came down into paradise before the Fall, Adam and Eve ran delightedly to meet Him and worship Him. His voice and footstep



were to them like what a beloved father's are. But after the Fall, you recollect, when they heard Him walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they were afraid, and ran to hide themselves. They got behind the trees, that they might have a screen between them and a face they feared to see. That was what sinning did for them. All men are by nature in that state hiding away behind the trees. Travellers in the Alps, among the snows and glaciers, sometimes come all of a sudden to the edge of a wide, deep crack in the ice, and start back appalled at the dark, sounding chasm that stretches between them and the other side. Sin has opened a gulf like that between God and souls. It has raised great black clouds to hide from man's heart the bright sun. And so long as people go on in sin, the clouds get the thicker and the blacker. If, on a dark day, people were to say, 'The sun is out of sight, let us kindle great fires to help the daylight that is struggling through the clouds, what would be the result?' The smoke from the huge fires would go up and blacken the face of the sky more than ever. So when men try to do without God, the cloud between Him and them is getting always the thicker. There are several very dark things in that cloud. There is ignorance of God. There is dread of God. There is hatred of God.

Then God, on His side, does not know man. You must not mistake me. God sees all men; knows all about them; knows them better than they know themselves; and, as the Psalm says, is 'acquainted with all' their 'ways'. Moreover, God does not hate men as sinners hate Him. We must on no account conceive of God as in heart our enemy. That would be to take Satan's way of looking at Him. It is the great error of men to take that view. They turn their backs on their Father, and walk away from Him, and they think He must have done the same; or if He looks after them, it must be to send thunderbolts to slay them. But they mistake. God is looking after them in pity. He is crying, Return, O backsliding children! But all the while that they are going away from Him he cannot take pleasure in them. He cannot delight in their ways. And if they will not return, he must leave them to their folly. You know how very tenderly a mother loves her child, how much pleasure she has in looking at it, talking to it, caressing it. But if her child die, for all the love she has for it, she must bury it out of sight. She may keep its little clay in the house for a few days, but even her love must let it be carried away at last, and laid in the cold, dark earth. Now, sinners are in God's sight dead; their souls are corrupt; God cannot take pleasure in them; and if they refuse to be quickened, and come back, He must bury them at length away in the 'outer darkness,' where the 'worm dieth not'.

**II. There is a Way of having Friendship between God and the Soul Restored.**—After sin had broken up communion with God, man would neither have earnestly wished to make the quarrel up, nor could he have been able to do so. God did not make the

breach. He did not go away from us till we left Him. He did not break His covenant. Man did. Even, therefore, if man had sought back, it was for God to say whether He would allow him to stay again among His holy children, and in what way He would permit it. But man, as I have said, would not have sought back. The way of reconciling man must come from God Himself. It has come, and we should wonder at the grace which has made it known to us. Suppose a boy expelled from school for disobedient and wicked conduct. Would it not be kind enough if the master should agree to receive him on his coming back of his own accord, and knocking at the door, and asking humbly for admission? But what would you say of the kindness of his teacher if he were to go forth to the boy, and talk with him, and plead with him, to bring him to a right state of mind, and to restore him to his place in the school? More than all this God has done to bring sinners back to Himself.

The way to be in friendship with God is to love Jesus. God so loves Jesus, for what He is and for what He has done and suffered, that He cannot but love every one who loves Him. Jesus tells us so Himself. He says, 'He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father'. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, tells us that the spirit at death 'returns to God who gave it.' Now, when a soul goes into God's presence after death to receive judgment according to its character, it is as if God asked, Does this soul love Jesus? If not, He cannot allow it to enter heaven; if it does, He cannot keep it out of heaven.

**III. It is your Duty and your Happiness to be Reconciled to God.**—It is your duty. Do now be reconciled, for it is right. He made you. He died to reconcile you. You breathe His air, you wear His clothes, you eat His bread, you see His light, you speak because He enables you. You are nothing without Him. It must surely be very wicked to live at enmity with Him.

It is very miserable, too. It is your life to know Him. There are some men whose faces it is a joy to see. If a home is at all what it should be, what a pleasure the father's face gives in it! Could the child be happy, think ye, any more than he could be good, who should go out and in at his father's door every day, sleep under his roof, eat from his table, but never speak to him unless he could not help it, steal out of his presence whenever he could, and show in every way that he had no regard for him? Thousands in God's world are doing that. But happy are all who do otherwise. Their Father is so glorious and good, that to see His face is peace and gladness. The text says, that by getting acquainted with God good shall come to us. We shall have a good income, is the word. So we shall, for everything shall be bringing in to us. The day, the night, the winter, the summer, friends, enemies, angels, trials, mercies, life, death—all shall contribute to make us blest. For, 'if God be for us, who can be against us?'—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 253.

## A PARABLE IN CLAY

*(A Message for the New Year)*

'I am formed out of the clay.'—JOB XXXI. 6.

*Object—A piece of modeller's clay.*

I HOLD in my hand a piece of clay, soft and pliable. Inside is a piece of silver, which represents the treasure hidden in the clay, typical of the soul.

Christ Jesus came to earth in the form of clay. 'Verily He took our nature upon Him.'

Now first I shall speak of the token clay, and secondly, of the treasure which the clay contains.

What Christ revealed in the clay.

**Conformed to His Father's Likeness.**—The express image of the invisible God.

Very often people say of a child, he is the perfect image of his father.

**Loyal to His Father's Will.**—At His baptism God said, 'This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.'

The motto of one of the most honoured of God's servants, Earl Cairns, was, 'God claims you.'

**Attractive with His Father's Word.**—'He spoke as one having authority.' A boy's comment on a powerful preacher was, 'He makes a fellow listen.'

**Yielding Himself to His Father at Calvary.**—'Into Thy Hands I commit my spirit.'

Now I take the clay and break it, and draw from it this new shilling. The shilling is a good type for this first Sunday in the year, because it is made up of twelve parts, there are twelve months in the year, and are there not twelve hours in the day? The words on the clock at the Head-quarters of the Salvation Army in London are, 'Every hour for Jesus'. Boys and girls, you contain the treasure for which He has died—a soul for service all the year. I close with an original appeal:—

Twelve pence make a shilling,  
Boys and girls be up and willing;  
Twenty shillings make a pound,  
Always in God's work abound.

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 78

## MINE OR THINE?

'Should it be according to thy mind?'—JOB XXXIV. 33.

JOB was an old scholar, but he had got out of school for a while and fancied he was to be always now his own master. But it was not so, and the great Teacher—God—saw that there were some very important things he needed still to learn, and so He sent him back to school.

Now, an old scholar doesn't take kindly to going back to school. It takes one down so much, you know, to be made just like the rest after we have put on airs and counted ourselves something better. So Job fretted a good deal, and was a bit sore at heart (all of which showed there were some lessons he had still to learn), and Elihu, his friend, was sorry for him, and tried to show him that things were just as they should have been. 'For,' said Elihu, 'who should

know best what is right to do—Teacher or Job? Should the lesson be according to *thy* mind, or according to the *Teacher's*?' And Job came at last quite to understand this, and then he mastered his lesson finely.

'Should it be according to thy mind?' Ask yourself that, my child, whenever anything hard or difficult is set before you. There are some things we can pick and choose, but there are some things we can't. You can say, 'I would rather join the French class than the German one,' but once you have joined you can't say, 'I would rather learn this way than that way'. There is only one way for you then—and that's the teacher's way—not yours. Fine dunces we would all be if we shaped our own way of learning! Tommy would never find time to master the alphabet, he would be so busy in trying to find out easier ways of doing it; and Annie would never master her scales, she would get so confused with her own notions of learning them. In all these things every one has to say to himself, 'Should it be according to my mind?' and only when he learns that it shouldn't be, but should be according to the teacher's, does he ever begin to learn properly.

Now, this is a very good thing to remember for the school you go to every morning, but it is also a very good thing to remember for a school which is bigger than that one—a school you will never get out of all your days—the big, big school of the world's work. It sounds almost like a puzzle, but I think the meaning is quite plain: that it is just when you leave school you go into school, for it is then, when we go out into the world, that our real lessons begin. So you must think of this when you are there too—when the lessons are hard, and the page has sometimes to be stained with tears, and we are inclined to fancy that things aren't right—that is the right time to put this question to the heart—'Should it be according to thy mind, or according to God's?'

For it is God who is wanting to teach us and train us for what we can do best, for the very best that we ever possibly can do—which will be best for us and best for Him. And He can't teach us unless we are willing to let Him do it in His own way.

Do you remember about Joseph? God wanted to make him good and great (good and great, please observe, not great and good—for God makes no one great who doesn't first learn to be good—and it is because men don't notice this they are always making mistakes). And how did He manage it? Not as we would have tried. We would have made everything pleasant and nice, and spared him all trouble and pain, and in the end Joseph would most likely have been conceited and soft, and unfitted to do a thorough day's honest work all his life. And the wise Teacher knew all this, and so He first taught Joseph to trust Him. That was the lesson he learnt in the pit. Then He taught him how to be independent, and keep to his God though everybody else was an idolater and laughed at him. That was the lesson he learnt in the prison. So, page on page

strange lessons were given to Joseph, and some were very hard to learn, but he mastered them all one by one; then, when he was ready for it, God found him a great situation—next to the throne. It would have been no use giving him that situation before—he couldn't have kept it. But he could and did keep it when he had gone through his education, and then, when he looked back he saw how good it was that his lessons had been given him according to God's mind, and not according to his own.

And was it not so with David—the shepherd's boy who was made a king? Wasn't it so with Paul—who had to unlearn a deal to make room for something better? Yes, it has been so with everybody who has ever done God's work rightly and bravely in the world, and laid him down at last to sleep, with

Something attempted, something done,  
To earn a night's repose.

These were all made what they became by being willing to let the Great Teacher set their lessons for them.

Even Jesus, God's own dear Son, did so. How difficult His lessons were! To do good, and get hated for it; to seek to save, and find so many wanting to destroy Him for it; to love God with all His heart, and yet to be sent to the cruel cross! Ah! His were hard lessons, but you know, the harder the task, the more honour when it is done. And Jesus got the honour, and is getting it now, for He is exalted to the throne, and made our Prince and Saviour. When things were at their worst with Him He understood they should not be according to His mind, but according to God's, and so He said, 'Not My will, but Thine be done'.

Would you wish to have things according to *your* mind? Then there is only one way for doing that safely—it is by letting the same mind be in you that is in Jesus. When He and you are of one mind everything will be right and will please you, but if He and you are of different minds, you can only have pain and trouble, and nothing can be right. Don't look for smooth things only and easy tasks, be ready for rough and hard ones too. The Teacher knows best; if it is according to His mind, then it must be right, as we shall one day know.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 10.

### THE SNOW

'For He saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth.'—JOB xxxvii. 6.

You have played so much in the snow that I wish to talk to you about it; for it is a wonderful thing and a beautiful thing.

It is so wonderful a thing that if you had never seen a snowstorm in your life, you would be frightened at the falling flakes, or dance with delight in trying to catch them. It is so wonderful that if you were to go to any part of the earth where there is no snow in winter and tell them what you have seen, they

would not believe you. If you should tell the boys and girls there that in your country you could take water in your hands, make it into round balls and throw them at one another in mimic battle; that you could build forts of it with high walls all round; that you could form houses out of it and build fires inside them; that you could roll it up into huge balls as high as your head; that you could shovel a path through it with banks on both sides; that you could fashion it into the image of a man with legs, arms, head, nose, and eyes, do you think they would believe what you say? And if you should tell them you had seen the water driven by the wind into great drifts on the top of which you could walk; that you had great sport in sliding down the hills on the snow; that it would lodge on the roofs of the houses and stay there for many days; that it would heap itself up on the limbs of the trees until they would bend to the ground or break off; that it would form a ridge on the telegraph wires; that you could skate over it on iron,—why, what do you think they would say to your story? Would they believe you? Perhaps they would fetch some water and say to you: 'Make this into balls and throw them at us; cut paths through this water; heap it up in ridges on the limbs of trees; fashion it into the form of a man with legs and hands, and head and eyes, and we will believe you, but not till then'. Then you would cry out: 'Oh, it is water frozen into snow and ice that I was telling you about'. And they would say: 'Freeze this water into snow or ice and we will believe you, but not till then'.

How could you make them believe what you say? They had never seen snow or ice or frost which you have seen so often. You could not turn water into snow or ice, and they would regard you as a great liar. You would have told them the truth, but they would not believe you because they had never seen what is so common to you, and because snow is such a wonderful thing.

For snow is moisture or water freezing in the air; and ice is frozen water on the ground or river. You breathe on a warm day, and you do not see your breath at all; but you go out some cold morning, and your breath looks like a cloud of smoke. Why? Because the moisture or water in your warm breath meets the cold air and becomes a cloud of fog for a moment, then it freezes and falls to the ground as frost. Job says in the tenth verse of the chapter from which the text is taken: 'By the breath of God frost is given'. He likens God to a great man breathing over all the land, and the ground is covered with white frost, the frozen breath of God. When a warm current of air meets a cold current, the water in the air freezes and falls as snow. And so Job says, 'God saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth,' and the ground is covered as with a clean white garment.

And snow is very beautiful; when the moisture or water in the air freezes, it forms the most beautiful crystals and falls to the ground. These crystals are in many forms and sizes. One man examined and



pictured nearly a hundred different forms of the crystals. If you catch a large flake on a still day and look at it through a magnifying glass or a microscope, you will see a thing of beauty, but not a joy for ever; for it will soon melt into water. If you look into Webster's largest dictionary, you will find pictures of the crystals of snow and can see how beautiful they are. So if you look at the frost marks on the window glass some cold morning, you will find most beautiful tracings, made by the crystals of water when freezing. You cannot draw anything so beautiful.

Snow is white and clean when it falls, and so it is made to stand for cleanliness or purity. The clothes of angels are said in the Bible to be as white as snow; and white is worn by boys and girls, men and women, as a sign of purity. Job speaks in one place of washing himself in snow water, and making his hands never so clean. So you should have white, clean hands and faces, and should keep your clothes clean; so that snow may be a symbol of your purity.—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons to Children*, p. 255.

### FEATHERS

JOB XXXIX. 13.

THE question, 'Gavest Thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks, or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?' occurs in the Book of Job (A.V.). Did you ever think about wings and feathers? There is a great deal to be learned about them, far too much for one little talk indeed. Suppose we think of feathers only. Somebody has asked what a wise man would say, who had never seen a bird, if he had a plucked partridge set before him, and was requested to invent some kind of clothing for it which should be light and warm, proof against wet, and suitable for flying through the air. It would be a great puzzle, I think. A feather is a wonderful bit of God's workmanship. You have waved one about, and found how strongly it resists the air. Did you examine it in order to see how that happens? Well, you could not do that very easily. You need a strong magnifying-glass. Get one as soon as you can, and look at a feather through it. You will see that every barb of the feather, every one of the hair-like things which grow out from each side of the quill, has little barblets growing out from it, and those barblets have lesser barblets growing out from them, and that they hook into one another as you can hook your fingers together when you clasp your hands. A learned naturalist has reckoned that there must be in one good-sized eagle feather fifty-four millions of branches and barblets and threads! You will not be so very much astonished by his calculation when you have looked at a feather with your own eyes under a magnifying-glass. The wing-feathers of any bird which can fly are like woven things, so closely are the tiny barblets fitted into one another; if it were not so, flight would be almost impossible. In a bird's wing the feathers are so arranged that they lap under one another from the outside of the wing to the body, so that when

the bird strikes downwards they are firmly pressed together, and the whole wing, which is hollow like the bowl of a spoon, encloses a wingful of air, and as this is forced out behind, where the tips of the feathers are yielding and elastic, he is driven upwards and forwards. When, however, he lifts his wing again, the feathers turn edgeways and are separated, so that the air passes through them, and he still rises while preparing for the next stroke. You imitate the action when you 'feather' your oar in rowing, and that is how you get the word for the movement. If it were not for this arrangement, the upstroke of the wing would sink the bird downward nearly as much as the downstroke sends it upward. But this is talking of 'wings,' and we must keep to 'feathers'.

You may ask of what feathers are made. Of the same substance as your hair and your finger-nails, and the scales on the leg of a bird or the body of a snake or a lizard, and the white of an egg. Perhaps you have noticed how water rolls off the glossy skin of an egg which has been boiled and shelled, and you have often noticed how quickly a bird's feathers are dry after bathing. I wish I could explain to you how a feather grows, but I am afraid that is impossible without pictures. Make a note in your memory about the subject. But I may tell you that every feather is made by being run into a mould, as candles or iron castings are. While its substance is liquid, it flows into hollow spaces prepared for it in a sheath or cylinder. Think of the delicacy of a mould in which the barbs and barblets of a feather are fashioned!

Enough has been said, perhaps, to set you thinking about feathers, but a word may be added on the beauty of them. Have you examined a feather from the train of a peacock, and noted how every separate barb is coloured so as to make part of the pattern, how every 'eye' with its nine or ten rings of colour is formed of distinct barbs? If you have done so, you have felt that this could not be chance-work, but that a great Designer gave each thread its proper colour in the proper place, so that all together should make the beautiful pattern. And perhaps you remember that an old-time Psalmist bids us hope that the Almighty will cover us with His feathers, and that under His wings we may be in safety.—JOHN A. HAMILTON, *The Wonderful River*, p. 143.

### THE EAGLE

'Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?'—JOB XXXIX. 27.

JEHOVAH is answering Job out of the whirlwind. He brings before him a grand panorama of external nature—the earth and sea, snow and hail, the Pleiades and the lightning—the wild goat, the wild ass, the ostrich, the hawk, and the eagle; and as the glorious pageant defiles before his eyes, he forces him to face and answer the question: Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer. And Job's answer is all that could be de-

sired: 'Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' The greatness of God in nature has taught man his own utter insignificance.

Doth the eagle mount up at *thy* command? No. All these pictures point man to God. They combine to illustrate the mind and thought of Him who formed them and cares for them. So that the conclusion of Ruskin is more than justified that the universe is not a mirror that reflects to proud self-love her own intelligence. It is a mirror that reflects to the devout soul the attributes of God.

**I. The Rock-dwelling Habits of the Eagle.**—'She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock and the strong place' (ver. 28). It is to this that Obadiah refers when he takes up his parable against the Edomites. They too were rock-dwellers, who had made for themselves houses and founded cities in the rocky fastnesses of Mount Seir. But they are reminded that the impregnable and inaccessible heights to which they have resorted will be no defence against Jehovah: 'Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord'. It is even added that Edom would become utterly desolate: 'As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee, . . . and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau'. And if the testimony of modern travellers may be accepted, the desolation is mournful enough. In 1848 Miss Harriet Martineau visited Petra, the chief of these rock-cities, and describes it as follows: 'Nowhere else is there desolation like that of Petra, where these rock doorways stand wide—still fit for the habitation of a multitude, but all empty and silent except for the multiplied echo of the cry of the eagle, or the bleat of the kid. No; these excavations never were all tombs. In the morning the sons of Esau came out in the first sunshine to worship at their doors, before going forth, proud as their neighbour eagles, to the chase; and at night the yellow fires lighted up from within, tier above tier, the face of the precipice' (*Eastern Life*, vol. III. 5).

The Edomite, alas! is gone, though the eagle is still left, and she fixes her habitation on the dizzy crag.

**II. The Acuteness of the Eagle's Sight.**—'From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off' (ver. 29). The eye of a bird is a marvellous structure. It is a telescope and microscope combined. It has the power of compressing the lens to adapt it to varying distances; and is larger in proportion than the eye of quadrupeds. The kestrel hawk, for instance, feeds on the common field mouse; but this tiny creature is so like the colour of the soil, that a human eye could scarcely detect it at the distance of a few yards. The kestrel, however, has no such difficulty. Her telescopic eye sees it from the sky overhead, and like a bolt from the blue, she swoops down upon the helpless prey. No mistake is made as she nears the ground. Swiftly and almost instantaneously the telescope is compressed into the microscope, and the daring freebooter could pick up a pin.

The same power is possessed by the Griffin vulture or 'eagle' of Holy Scripture. '*Her eyes behold afar off.*' A dozen eagles may be soaring upwards in the sunlight, until they become mere specks against the blue of heaven, but they are carefully watching each other in their wheeling circles, and diligently scanning the desert below in the hope of discovering some prey. The moment the object is sighted, and even one bird has made a swoop downwards, the movement is detected by the one nearest, which immediately follows; while the second is followed by a third, and the third by a fourth, until in a few minutes, 'wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together'. Their vast power of wing and acuteness of sight have led them to the prey.

And the lesson is not far to seek. In the Carlyle use of the word it emphasises the need of being able to *see*. 'To the poet, as to every other, we say first of all, *see*. If you cannot do that, it is of no use stringing rhymes together and calling yourself a poet, there is no hope for you.' And in religion it is the pure in heart that see God. If the inner eye be single, the whole body shall be full of light. The aged *seer* on Patmos saw into the heaven of heavens. Like Paul, he heard words not lawful to be uttered; and thus in the symbolism of the Christian Church, he is known as the New Testament *eagle*. He was the one who 'saw more and heard more, but spake less than all the other disciples'. But all the saints of God may soar and *see* in some measure as he did—

On eagles' wings, they mount, they soar,  
Their wings are faith and love.  
Till past the cloudy regions here  
They rise to heaven above.

**III. The Eagle and her Young.**—'Her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she' (ver. 30).

The eagle is one of the most rapacious of birds, and her terrible instincts are transmitted to her young, which '*suck up blood*'. This is heredity in its most awful form, and is well fitted to shadow forth the grim heritage of woe which is handed down to *their* children by the drunkard, the libertine, and the thief. But in any form the thought is a solemn one, forcing even the Psalmist to wail, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me'. The fountain of the life is polluted, as well as the streams—'Her young ones also suck up blood'.

But this is not the only way in which the eagle influences her young. Allusion is frequently made to the way in which she supports them in their first essays at flight. When the tired fledgling begins to flutter downwards she is said to fly beneath it, and present her back and wings for its support. And this becomes a beautiful illustration to the sacred writers of the paternal care of Jehovah over Israel: 'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did

lead them and there was no strange god with them' (Deut. xxxii. 12). 'I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself' (Exod. xix. 4).

Let ours be the holy ambition to be worthy of that care.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 145.

### THE CROCODILE

'Leviathan.'—JOB XLI. I.

I. THE crocodile is a *very repulsive-looking* creature. It is a great mercy that some dangerous creatures look dangerous. You have only to look at the crocodile to feel satisfied that his mission is not a very kindly one. His head and jaws are flattened into the form of a triangle, and that is never a good sign. Indeed, you only need look at his great jaws, opening up to the very end of the skull, and his teeth without the decency of having lips to cover them, to conclude that his *forte* is eating. His glaring eyes, his scaly skin, his flat feet, and the hideous way in which he crawls along, also soon convince you that he is not a very lovable creature or desirable neighbour.

Now there are questions asked about this creature in this chapter which suggest other facts about him. The first is, 'Canst thou draw out a leviathan with a hook?' This suggests:—

II. The crocodile is *not caught as easily* as some creatures. You can catch fish, and often very large ones, with a hook that has a bait upon it. But you cannot do that with the crocodile: it requires a very exceptional hook to lay hold of him, and a very strong cord and arm to pull him up when he is caught.

But there is a further question: 'or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?' You cannot put a loop upon a cord and fasten it upon the crocodile's tongue, because it is joined to his jaw all along except just at the margin. You cannot manage this unmanageable creature.

III. He is *difficult to wound*. His skin is covered with bones or with horny substances, which are joined together all along the back, so that we are told an ordinary bullet will not penetrate it. You must have a bullet tipped with steel, and shot from a first-class rifle, before you can make any headway through that coat of mail. There is also a reference in the Psalms to the strength of his skull and jawbones. It is almost impossible to crush them.

IV. The crocodile is *terrible* to behold. In the East his eyes are made to represent the rising sun, partly because they are so brilliant, and partly because they are the first to appear when this creature rises out of the water, as they are fixed very high upon the skull. What a sight to see two glaring eyes above the water when little else of the ugly monster is in sight! Then, when his jaws appear arrayed with teeth, which, as I have said, have no lips to cover them, he appears still more hideous. There is a reference here to a double row of teeth. By that we are to understand that the crocodile has practically a double set of teeth; for those he uses

have hollows at their roots filled by other young teeth, which are ready to take their places when they fall off. So that you see this creature grows teeth in abundance. Moreover, as this monster emerges out of the water or mud, the more you see of him the more repulsive he appears. His feet, his scales, and terrible tail, all add to the loathsomeness of his appearance.

One finds a difficulty sometimes in knowing what such creatures are for. One is apt to come to a conclusion that, though almost all creatures have a purpose in life, there can be no great good of a crocodile ever living, except, perhaps, supplying skin for purses and fancy hand-bags. The vultures that watch this creature laying its eggs in the sand or mud would not agree with us in that opinion, for as soon as it leaves the spot they enjoy the eggs immensely. They no doubt feel strongly that a crocodile is good for something. It depends what standpoint we take in deciding whether a creature is of any good or not. But I have no doubt that we shall find by and by that the crocodile may be made of greater service than we have yet thought possible.

I have often wondered at the man who found out that the tortoise was good for anything—especially for soups, of all things on the face of the earth. Who, in looking at the tortoise, would think of making soup of such a creature? The man who first thought of that possibility must have been a very ingenious and clever man, and we owe a great deal to him. Therefore, we must not come to the conclusion at once that there is no possible good in the existence of the crocodile, especially when we have already learnt to set great value on his skin.

V. The crocodile in *some senses is a very helpless* creature. Gnats enter his mouth, sting him mercilessly, and almost drive him mad; and natives, who know that he cannot turn his head round to the right or to the left, slip on one side and ride on his back, knowing that he is perfectly helpless. What a mercy it is that such terrible creatures have their weak points!

VI. The crocodile is a creature that *needs to be watched*. Its eggs and its young appear very harmless. Again, even when full grown the crocodile is dormant at times and sleeps in the mud; but when people see the mud rise here and there in the form of mounds they keep at a respectable distance, for they know that the sleeping crocodile is waking and may soon be upon them.

VII. The crocodile, hideous and terrible as he is, is *worshipped by many*. But, you say, there is nothing about him that would draw our reverence. No, but those who worship the crocodile worship him from fear. We cannot well understand that. We worship Him whom we love. One of the charms of our religion is that love casts out fear. We know that Jesus Christ is a Saviour Who loves us with an everlasting love. We know that He has died that we may live, and therefore our religion is a religion of love; but the poor people who worship the croc-



dile, have a very different kind of religion. They worship the terrible. They have no love for their God; they only worship from fear, and therefore do they worship the crocodile, that loathsome scaly creature, twenty-five or thirty feet long, the terror of every one who looks at him. Now, the Egyptians feel that after all there is no pity in the heart of a crocodile. I suppose they doubt very much whether he has a heart. The tears of the crocodile, as you know, are proverbial. I do not know whether he sheds tears; but if he does they are not worth much: they do not denote much pity. The Egyptians look upon the crocodile as a god who cannot weep from any sympathy, and who cannot have a tender regard for those who worship him. They worship

him because they fear and dread him. What a sad condition those people must be in who can have no better god than this hideous, crawling, pitiless crocodile to worship.

What a mercy, then, that we can look up and realise that our God is our Father, and the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that He loves us with infinite love; and that wherever we go in life, and whatever our experience is, He watches over us, not with the cruel eye of a creature who seeks our hurt, but with the tender, sympathetic look of One Who ever seeks our highest good, even our salvation from sin and all its woe!—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children* (6th Series), p. 182.

# PSALMS

## A BIBLE PICTURE

'Like a tree planted by the rivers of water.'—PSALM I. 3.

I WAS staying for a few days on the banks of the Hudson, in America, and my host drove me to see some rocks called the Palisades. It was one of the hottest days of summer. The road went up through half-cleared brushwood and forest. The grass, the wayside flowers, the leaves on the trees, had a withered and sickly look. The labourers in the fields seemed to be weighted with lead as they swung their scythes. The horse was covered with sweat. And we ourselves had long since sunk into silence, anxious only to shelter our heads from the pitiless heat.

Suddenly we passed into a cooler air. The shadow of great trees covered us; and my host halted his horse to let it cool.

'Come this way,' he said, when he had made horse and wagonette fast to a fence. And he led the way through the trees and down a footpath into a hollow, where there was a spring of the clearest and coolest water. The brushwood leaves had made a rich border all around its edges, but underneath the water stole and made a way for itself down the centre of the hollow and beyond, until we could see the gleam of it shining like a thread of light for several hundred yards.

As we sat in this delicious coolness enjoying both the water and the shade, I was struck with the difference of the leaves in this hollow with those we had seen by the way. They were green and fresh like the leaves of spring. Then I remembered a word in Jeremiah about 'the man that trusteth in the Lord and whose hope the Lord is, that he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when trial cometh; but her leaf shall be green'. And I said to myself, 'Here in this hollow, on the banks of the Hudson, is the very picture which Jeremiah saw long ago in the East, and it is showing forth still, to all who will see it, the beauty, the freshness, and the joy of being a child of God'.

It is a Bible picture; and among Bible pictures there is none more beautiful or true. 'Like a tree planted by the waters.' How fair, how pleasant to the eye a tree so planted is! Its leaves do not wither; its strength does not fail; it brings forth its fruit in its season. And under its branches in hot days there is refreshing shade for both man and beast. And such as that is every child of God—so fair, so fresh, so fruitful to the very end of life. As the ninety-second Psalm says: 'They shall bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing'.

Where the prophet Ezekiel has to describe a multitude of God's children he uses the same picture. He describes a multitude of trees on the banks of a river. And he also tells how those trees come to be so fair and plentiful. It is because they are nourished by the river of the life of God in the world. And this river of the life of God in the world is just the Gospel. It is the Gospel, partly in the Bible and partly in the lives of God's people. Ezekiel takes us to the door of a church, and points to a tiny little spring of water trickling out from under the steps. As small a thing as that is the first preaching of the Gospel. It is a still small voice, a single word, a little thing sent out from the church—sent out into a new country where nobody yet knows of God's love. But just as the spring that trickles out of the earth becomes a little stream, and the little stream deepens at every step—up to the ankles now, and now up to the knees—until by and by it becomes a great stream in which swimmers can swim, and fishermen cast their nets, so with the preaching of the Gospel. Once begun it spreads through the entire land; and then, just as when a river has deepened and spread in a land great trees spring up on its banks and make a forest, so, as the goodness of God's love comes to be talked about and carried from one to another over all the land, people who did not know God and did not care for Him are drawn to Him; and tens, hundreds, and at last thousands are seen worshipping and serving Him with gladness of heart. The land is filled with them.

On the old highway between Jerusalem and Babylon, in the days of the great King Solomon, lay a far-spreading wilderness. Travellers could find in it neither shelter, nor resting place, nor food. The King said, 'I will build a city for shelter and for rest in this wilderness'. Far up among the hills were springs and rivers of water. The King caused canals to be cut in the sides of the hills and along the plains to the heart of the wilderness. And there on the banks he planted palm trees for food and for shelter, and beside them streets of houses for refreshment and rest. And he called the new city Tadmor—the City of Palms; but some time in after days it came to be called Palmyra.

In the second Book of Chronicles it is called Tadmor in the Wilderness.

I once heard a minister preach from the text, 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree,' and he told the story of Tadmor. It is a long, long time since I heard that sermon. It was back in a time long past, when one or two old ministers chanted their sermons as if they were singing the prose psalms. And this minister said, singing as he spoke, that the

story of Tadmor in the wilderness was just a type, a parable, of the story of the Christian Church.

'Tadmor!' he exclaimed; 'Tadmor in the Wilderness! Palmyra, the City of Palms! The great King Solomon went up to the hills where the springs of water were, and made wells and tanks and waterways down into the waste places of the plain. And there he planted his palm trees. And under their shadow he built his houses and streets and walls. And it was a city in the wilderness; a city for refreshment and rest; and the weary traveller, hot with the toil of the desert and parched and hungry, saw the stately trees from afar, and rejoicing hastened on, and entering found shade and rest and food. That was Tadmor in the Wilderness, the city which the great King Solomon built—Palmyra, the City of Palms.

'And that is the story of Zion, the city of our God. Just that same purpose is served by its citizens in this wilderness of earth. They are set like palm trees for shade and for refreshment to poor travellers by the way, who have not yet found rest in God.'

It is a picture of the same kind which John sets before us when he has to write down for us his visions of heaven. The citizens of heaven were just like those described by this old minister, and by Ezekiel, and by Jeremiah. They are planted by the river of God's life. There is in John as in Ezekiel a river; but whereas in Ezekiel it is seen flowing out from under the steps of God's temple, in John it flows out from under His throne. But it is the same river—the river of God's life—that gives life to His people. And the picture of His people is also the same: on either side of the river was there a tree of life—living trees, many trees, but of one sort—trees with life in them—'which bare twelve manner of fruit every month'.

A river, river banks, trees on either bank, shade in summer heat, fruit in the time of fruit: a world as fair, as fruitful, as cool, as lovely as spreading fruit trees on river banks—that is the picture of heaven, and the picture of the people of heaven which John beheld in Patmos.

And I cannot help thinking how sweet that picture would be for John. He was a captive in the mines and quarries of Patmos, wearing the chain and toiling at the tasks of a captive. Day by day he would be driven out under the hot sun, with others chained like himself, to toil and suffer, shut in by the tossing waves of the bitter sea.

How pleasant to him the visions sent by God of a quiet country which no sea shut in, which had a river of fresh water flowing through it, and river banks all covered with beautiful trees! That would seem to him just like heaven. And just like that, but fairer far, heaven will seem to all who enter it: A beautiful country; God's life flowing through it like a river; and God's children flourishing and bringing forth fruit like palm trees on the banks of a river; and all of them drinking up life from the river of the life of God, which is flowing even now, in this very world, in His Word and in the lives of His people, and in

His Son Jesus Christ, and in that Holy Spirit which every child may have for the asking.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 283.

### DAVID'S EVERGREEN

'And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'—  
PSALM I. 3.

THE banks of the Jordan near Jericho are lined with oleanders whose bright blossoms and dark green leaves give the place the appearance of a garden bordered by a plain which rears only scraggy brown shrubs. It is natural to fancy that the object-lesson in the first Psalm was suggested by the oleanders on the brink of the Jordan. I say suggested, for the Psalmist's evergreen, unlike the oleander and our evergreens, is a fruit-bearer. To a Jew the Jordan was the river of rivers, and the sight on its banks at the spot nearest Jerusalem is one not likely to be forgotten, as the beauty of the evergreens here is greatly heightened by the barrenness of the neighbouring plain.

Your friends wish you to get out of life all the good you can, and to be among the best men and women under heaven. They wish each of you to be like David's evergreen, firmly rooted at the river's brink, always fair, and always flourishing. I want to show you how, by God's blessing, you may succeed in life; and I shall speak to you about both the homeliest and the highest things.

Success in life is our subject, and it has two parts:—

I. The secret of success.

II. The crown of success.

**I. The Secret of Success.**—It is, I believe, threefold: *Shun strong drink, love your work, follow Christ.*

1. *Shun strong drink* as a beverage, shun it with your heart, shun it till your dying day. Thousands in our land began life as hopefully as you are doing, but by reason of strong drink they died miserably on a stair, or at a dyke back, or in the poorhouse; and others in wealthy homes have had as sorrowful deaths. Our national intemperance may be likened to the Yellow River, which is called 'China's Sorrow'. Having no banks it eats away the soft soil, and carries desolation along its course. The love of strong drink has made the lives of millions utter failures.

2. *Love your work.* The boy who hates honest work, or whose study is to do as little as possible, is likely to go to the bad. It is hatred of work that chiefly fills our prisons and reformatories. Put your might into your work at school and after you leave school; put your heart and conscience into it; grow warm at it; and you will prosper in body, mind, and soul. Make the love of work one of your guardian angels. It will help to make a man of any boy, and a man of the grandest mould. It is a sure sign of a noble spirit.

Stanley and Schweinfurth, the African travellers, tell us that the inhabitants of the great forest in the



heart of Africa are dwarfs and not men, because they have not sunshine, good food, or hard work. Your idler is always a dwarf of a man. Some foolish people do not know this. A Portuguese gentleman in Africa has the nail of his little finger uncut to show that he is above working with his hands.

Have a real ambition to be first rate at your work, and 'to get to the top of your calling,' whatever it is. How hugely interesting any bit of work grows when you try to do it well, and always a little better. That takes out of work all its hardness and brings you success. A Japanese ivory-carver was asked if he was not sorry to part with a beautiful work upon which he had spent many months. 'No,' was his fine reply, 'for I hope to make my next work still more beautiful.'

'How is James S—— getting on?' I once asked a merchant about a boy in his warehouse. 'Getting on!' he replied vigorously; 'no fear of *him* getting on: that boy can't help getting on.' Now listen, for his next words lay bare one of the great secrets of success—'He is as interested in everything about my warehouse as if it were all his own. It's a pleasure to have such a boy by one's side.' That boy put his religion into his work; do you the same. You will then be able to say with Mackay of Uganda, 'Duty before pleasure, but my duty is pleasure.'

3. *Follow Christ* is the third secret of success in life, and it carries in its bosom all the others. For you may gain earthly success, and yet your life may be an eternal failure. A man may slave for money and earthly fame, and may give his life and soul for them. Success is not that which brings the greatest happiness to the five senses, for any day you may have to live without your five senses. The millionaire may feel keenly on his death-bed that his life has been an utter failure. I never heard of a shroud with a pocket in it, for the dead rich man cannot take his money with him to give him a start in the other world: such an idea has found a home only among the most benighted heathens. True success must thus embrace both our life on earth and the life to come. You feel sure that you would not wish to face death and judgment with nothing but earthly success in your right hand.

At the battle of Waterloo Nathan Meyer Rothschild was in a shot-proof tent with a swift horse saddled and bridled by his side. At sunset he peered over the battle-field, and saw our soldiers sweeping the French before them. 'Hurrah!' he cried, 'the house of Rothschild has won Waterloo': his house had lent the money for it. He sprang into the saddle, galloped all night, reached the shore at daybreak, bribed a fisherman to take him across the stormy sea, and by whipping and spurring reached London thirty-six hours before anyone else. He used these hours in buying up all the stocks he could, and gained nearly two millions of pounds. Many on the battle-field besides him had perfect faith in the good news, but their faith was a thin lazy thing, and did not rouse them to act at once. And so a faith that does

not master and move you cannot make you rich in the goods of the soul. Real Christianity is a real living faith in a real living Saviour; it is a whole faith in the whole Saviour.

This whole faith in Christ will make you *faithful to Christ*, that is, true-hearted and loyal to Him till life's last hour. Faithfulness to Christ also ensures a hearty obedience to your parents, without which your life must prove a miserable failure.

**II. The Crown of Success in Life.**—The end crowns a human history. A green, peaceful, beautiful old age is a part of the prosperity celebrated in the first Psalm. The tree is to be evergreen to the very end. The fear of life, especially of old age, is common; and it is found among some thoughtful children.

The wisest way is not to think about old age at all, but to live now with all your heart the life of Christ. That keeps you from all those vile things that age the soul and heart, and make old men cross and joyless. I was reading that when our men-of-war were built of oak, they took the oak not from the forests but from the fields. The field-grown trees had drunk in more of heaven's sunshine, and thus had a stronger heart and lasted longer. That you may grow within and all around like David's evergreen, let nothing come between you and the sunshine of God's grace; let nothing come between the roots of your being and the river of life. Put away from you all that frets and sours the soul: be sweet-tempered, unselfish, generous: in a word, be Christ-like; and then you'll be ready for middle age and old age, should God bring you to it. In any case you shall have lived long enough, and David's incense-breathing evergreen will be your biography; for you shall not outlive true success and happiness. Why should not joy be the companion of your whole life journey? And the evergreen will be the emblem of your life beyond the grave. 'For this God is our God: He will be our guide, even unto death' (Ps. XLVIII. 14). These words mean, He guides us over death, or He guides us to immortality, or He guides us to youthfulness. In any case the meaning is that the evergreen shall be green for ever in the paradise above.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 63.

## THE SOUL'S KISS

'Kiss the Son.'—PSALM II. 12.

Young children can learn much if they try. Dr. Archibald Alexander, a writer of good books, went to church when he was four years old. The text was 'Anathema Maranatha'. He resolved that he would try to understand the hard words, and watched eagerly for the explanation. He caught it and remembered it till his dying day. Before you read further say to yourself, 'I must understand this little text'; and thank God that He often reveals to babes what is hidden from the world's wise ones.

But I must first explain the Psalm. Please open your Bible and look at it. It is a royal Psalm; David's heart boils up and runs over with the things he has

made touching King Jesus. The first three verses give a life-like picture of a great mob or riot. The kings of the earth become un'ingly, and join the rabble against the Lord and His Anointed. They are like the French rebels during the Revolution, who said they would overthrow the King of heaven as well as the monarchs of earth. They are like the apostate Julian, who, in scorn of Christ, pointed his naked dagger against heaven, as if he could wound the skies, or shake the throne of the Eternal. The fourth and fifth verses show how God views the riot below. 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.' What madness, what folly! The idea of man rushing against God! From the sixth to the ninth verse Jehovah and the Messiah speak; and from the tenth verse to the end Jehovah gives advices to all on the earth, and among them this, 'Kiss the Son'.

I wish to tell you—

I. What it is to kiss the Son.

II. Why you should do it.

Let us find out the *what* and the *why* of our beautiful text. Well then—

I. **What it is to Kiss the Son.**—When you kiss your mother it is a sign of love. When a friend brings you a present you speak your thanks with a kiss. A kiss, then, is a sign of grateful love. To kiss a king is to own him as your king. Thus Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, and kissed him (1 Sam. x. 1). When the ministers of our Queen come into office, they go to her, and kneeling, kiss her hand, and take the oath of homage, vowing that they will be true to her. We also read in the Bible of idol-worshippers kissing their idols. Thus to kiss the Son is to show love and loyalty to Him. Every Christian is a lover of Christ, and shows his love. His soul kisses the Son with the kiss, not of Judas, but of John. Christ loves you, how wonderful! He is the great lover of your soul. His life from the cradle to the cross, and all His sayings and doings give you countless proofs that He loves you. Can you scorn such love? Can you slight such a Saviour? The thought of sinning against such love has filled many children with shame, and brought them to the feet of Christ. Glad, grateful love to the Lord Jesus is the heart of true religion.

True loyalty never meanly asks, How little can I do for my king? it asks only, How much? It stands ready to do all it can. When Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary, had many enemies, she appeared before her Parliament with her little boy in her arms, and appealed to their loyalty. They were touched, started to their feet, and their enthusiasm broke forth into a war-cry that soon resounded through Europe, 'Let us die for our king!' And these were not vain words; for thousands of them did die for their king. Shall not this be our resolve, Let us live for our King, Who has died for us? Shall not such fine loyalty to earthly kings shame us, if among His scorners we are ever ashamed of Jesus? Shall not royalty like His call forth all the loyalty of your soul?

I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,  
Or to defend His cause,  
Maintain the glory of His cross,  
And honour all His laws.

It yet remains to show—

II. **Why you should Kiss the Son.**—David gives two great reasons. His foes are under the wrath of God; and his friends are blessed.

*Christ's foes are under God's wrath.*—Strange that the Son should have one foe! What is there about Him to kindle hatred in any breast? He is love; and can it be that Divine love calls forth the hatred of men? Are men monsters, devils, that they should rise against Him Who so loved us as to give Himself for us? It shocks us that Absalom rebelled against his father David; but a sinner rebelling against the Saviour, a creature dashing himself against his Creator, what can we say of that? No wonder David begins his Psalm, 'Why do the heathen rage?' It is earth's greatest miracle of sin and folly. We could not wonder should heathens revolt against their idols; for they are frightful to look upon, and their worship is terribly cruel; but the religion of Christ breathes goodwill to all men. Strange that thousands of professing Christians are so ready to kiss a graven image, and so slow to kiss the Son. In St. Peter's Church at Rome you might see crowds of young and old kissing the toes of an ugly blackened statue of Peter. The brazen toes of one foot are worn bright, and indeed nearly all worn off with constant kissing. Parents bring their little children and hold them up that they too may kiss the image. It is very sad that many are so eager to kiss *that* who will not kiss the Son.

The grand reason why you should kiss the Son is given in the last verse: '*Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him*'. They are blessed every way, and they are blessed always. One of the plainest proofs of this text is found among the poor and the vicious who have been converted. It is as plain as day that if all kissed the Son, the most of our miseries would straightway cease. Count up all the ills of life, and then ask how many of them could continue if the spirit of Christ ruled in every heart. The grace of God is the deadly foe of everything that is at war with our joy.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 103.

#### AIM STRAIGHT FOR —

'I will direct my prayer unto Thee.'—PSALM V. 3.

At every available corner in one of our great Southern cities there is a rather striking advertisement; a large painting on canvas or iron of a revolver pointing in one direction to a certain business house, and in large letters underneath are the words 'Aim straight for —'.

The idea at once suggested to me the figure used by the Psalmist David in his fifth Psalm, where he pictures the archer directing his bow and arrow on to the centre of the target.

I suppose that every girl and boy hopes to be able

to win a good place in life. Then may I offer these simple rules to observe:—

**I. Aim Straight for Gentleness.**—The world needs gentle men and gentle women. 'The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness' (Gal. v. 22).

In his powerful Psalm of thanksgiving King David sings, 'Thy gentleness hath made me great' for victory over his foes.

Two boys were waiting to cross a small ferry, when two aged women came along. One lad said to his companion, 'Stand back, Jim! ladies first'. That lad was one of Nature's gentlemen.

**II. Aim Straight for Goodness of Heart.**—'Keep thy heart with all diligence.' Take care of it, train it, culture it with best and purest thoughts.

There are many forms of heart disease. The worst of all diseases is sin. 'The pure in heart shall see God.' Aim to be able all through life to sing, 'My strength is the strength of ten men because my heart is pure'.

**III. Aim Straight for true Godliness.**—For even a child is known by his doings.

When Princess Victoria was told she was likely one day to be Queen of England she said, 'Then I will be good'. She kept her aim, and justly won the golden coronet of title of Victoria the Good. 'Her Court was pure, her life serene'.—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 12.

#### GOD OUR DEFENDER

'Let those that trust in Thee rejoice, because Thou defendest them.'—PSALM V. 11.

'LET those that trust in Thee rejoice, because Thou defendest them.' This is my text just now. It is one of the many beautiful things which David said when he thought of his God.

When men travel through forests where wild beasts like lions and tigers roam about in search of prey they carry with them fire-arms; and when at night they lie down in their forest tent to sleep they light a fire near its door, and then sleep in safety; for wild beasts don't like fire and keep away from it, so the gun is a defender by day and the fire by night. And when kings travel about in a country where they have enemies, soldiers travel with them—soldiers before them, soldiers behind them, and soldiers on either side of them—with swords by their sides, which they will draw against any man who dares to threaten the life of their king; and at night when the king lies down to sleep they camp round about him, keeping unsleeping watch, and thus day and night soldiers are his defenders.

And when an army comes against the loved homes of brave men to kill the wives and children, the brave men go out and meet the army to fight it and drive it back again. They are the passionate defenders of their homes. Sometimes the brave men are beaten in the fight and killed, and then their homes are captured and destroyed, and their poor wives and families are put to death, because their defenders are dead.

And this spirit of defence is almost as common among the lower creatures as among men. I have heard of a hawk swooping from its course in the sky down towards some little chickens that were scratching about by their mother's side, to seize one of them, soar up with it, and fly away to devour it; but the mother-hen, seeing the cruel purpose, bravely dashed in between the chickens and the hawk, and, cleverly and tremblingly dodging as the hawk dodged to get behind her, effectually kept it at bay, preferring to be herself pecked by the hawk's sharp beak, even to death, rather than to let her little ones suffer. That mother was a genuine defender.

I have read, too, of a brave stork, which had built its nest on a house, and there had laid its eggs and hatched its young. One day, long before the downy little things could fly, the house unfortunately caught fire. First the stifling smoke reached the nest, and against this the brave stork defended it as best as she could, covering it carefully with her broad wings. With the stifling smoke came great heat, which became greater every moment, till at last the flames appeared. From the caves they crept and leaped along up towards the ridge where, near the chimney, the nest was built. The heat must have been insufferable. The bird must escape or die. Yet escape she would not; she could not abandon her young. Even dead, she might lie upon them, and cover them from the fire with the scorched feathers of her wings. The fire burned on till at last the roof fell, and then, alas! bird, and nest, and young were all buried in the blazing ruins beneath. That poor faithful stork was a noble defender.

Among the many grand and brave deeds done to defend, none are more grand and brave than one done a little while ago. A nurse at a hospital for sick children was one day sent out with three little patients who had been in the hospital for some time for different diseases, and were now able to take a little air; the eldest of them was only eight years old.

As they proceeded on their walk, they were met by a dog, with foaming mouth, running furiously. No sooner did the dog see them than it at once rushed towards them. The dog was mad. They were all alarmed, and would have made their escape; but, before they had time to move, the dog was almost upon them. Seeing the frightful danger in which the children were placed, the nurse at once threw herself between them and the dog, which then sprung upon her, seized her by the arm, and tore her flesh dreadfully. It would have then attacked the three little invalids, who were behind the nurse, clinging to her dress; but, seeing this, and resolving to prevent it at all costs, she bravely threw herself upon the dog, clasped it in her bleeding arms, rolled over with it, knelt upon it, caught it now by its leg, now by its ears, struggling with all her might. She *must* keep it from the children; for she could bear anything but the idea of the dog getting at the children. The struggle ended by two men coming up, who killed the dog and carried the poor nurse back to her home.



where she died. The three little invalids were unhurt. They had had a brave and glorious defender. She lost her own life; she saved theirs.

Now, why have I told you these stories of defenders? Not only to make you think highly of the daring warrior who defends his hearth and home; not to make you admire the stork in the fire, or the hen before the hawk; not even to make you think highly of the nurse-girl who so splendidly braved such frightful dangers, bled, and at length died in her little charges' defence, though that would be good. I have a reason far better than these. From tender and strong hearts in the creature, I want you to rise to the tender and strong heart of the Creator. The grandest hearts are but drops of the Creator's love. They have all come down from the One perfect heart. So from admiration of earthly defenders, I want you to rise to admire and to adore the one great Defender—God, and to join them that put their trust in Him. Look up from man to God. Think how good it is to trust in kind friends, who, if danger arose, would defend you with their lives, then feel and say, 'It is still better to trust in the Lord'.

But one thing more—remember who it was that said this. It was David, himself a brave defender. It was David, the shepherd who defended his sheep against the lion and the bear. It was David, the king who defended Israel against Goliath and the Philistines. It was David, the father who, if he might, would have saved his son Absalom's life by sacrificing his own. Yes, it was David, the true shepherd, the brave king, the tender father, who felt just what I want you to feel. He felt that God is better than the best shepherd, and better than the best king, and better than the best father; and so the brave man said, 'Let them that put their trust in Thee rejoice, because *Thou defendest them*'.—B. WAUGH, *Sunday Evenings with My Children*, p. 115.

### THE GENTLEMAN'S PSALM

PSALM XV.

This Psalm Mr. Ruskin calls, 'The Gentleman's Psalm'. It contains a very homely description of a good man—what he does and what he does not do. Of course, it is so very, very old a picture that we are not surprised that it is not perfect; but it emphasises qualities which will make a good foundation for our lives.

**He that Walketh Uprightly and Worketh Righteousness.**—That is, the truly good man or gentleman is not idle or useless; he does his best with his brain and with his hands; he lives not to get pleasure but to do right.

**He Speaketh the Truth in his Heart.**—He speaketh the truth to himself as well as to others. He will not live on make-believe; he hates sham and shoddy; he loves the truth.

**He that Backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor doeth Evil against his Neighbour, nor Taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour.**—He does not say

mean things behind other people's backs; he does not whisper mischief; he does not bear false witness. 'What is bearing false witness?' asked a teacher in a school, and the best answer was, 'When nobody does nothing to nobody, and somebody goes and tells'. The true gentleman neither invents nor passes on mean things. He is like Tennyson's Knight of the Round Table, 'He speaks no slander, no, nor listens to it'. It takes two people to slander; one to speak—he is the worse, and one to listen—he is almost as bad.

But the Psalmist's good man never speaks ill of his comrades. Once his friend, always his friend. He does not cut his old acquaintance in the street because he has a shabby coat on, or because things have gone awry with him.

**In whose Eyes a Vile Person is Contemned; but he Honoureth them that Fear the Lord.**—He does not despise a man because he is poor or ignorant, or plain or ill-dressed; but he does despise people who think vilely and speak vilely and act vilely.

There was a lady the other day who was doing a gracious act in taking a poor maid-servant round the National Gallery; she had never been in such a place. It was not the pictures which interested her: it was those great smooth floors. When she saw them she said, 'Oh my! How those floors must make somebody's elbows ache! My! it would kill me to scrub 'em.' And there were some people who, when they heard her, tip-tilted their noses and moved away. She was so vulgar! Ah! but the real meaning of the word 'vulgar' has nothing to do with things at all—scrubbing floors or painting pictures; it has to do with the spirit in which things are done. Vulgar is that vulgar does.

**He Swearth to his own Hurt, and Changeth not.**—He does not break his promises, if it is by any means possible to keep them. You can rely on his word as you would rely on a bond. I cannot speak too strongly of the importance of paying heed to our words. Once on a time they brought to Socrates a well-dressed boy, asking the philosopher to pass an opinion on the lad. He said, 'But I have not heard him talk. Speak, boy, that *I may see you*.' The speech shows up the real self.

**He Putteth not out his Money to Usury, nor Taketh Reward against the Innocent. He that doeth these Things shall never be Moved.**—I think it means that he does not take advantage of other people's necessities. He is not a bird of prey that bites the poor, nor a crawling creature that sucks their blood. What he gets he will do his best to deserve. He will not rob people of their just rights. His opinion cannot be bought. His honour is dear to him.

Now, what does our Psalmist say? The man about whom these things are true, whatever happens—fire, storm, or earthquake—stands; for God does not permit a man of that sort to be lost; he stands fast for ever and ever.—B. J. SNELL, *Words to Children*, p. 166.

## UNDER WHICH FLAG

*(A railway reflection)*

PSALM XX. 5.

White is right, red is wrong,  
Green with caution, move slowly along.

So runs the old couplet, and just expresses the part the three little flags I hold in my hand play in the journey of life. Perhaps you noticed in reading the account of a recent railway disaster on one of our main lines that the guard put up the red flag to warn all approaching trains of danger. The red flag and the red light speak of danger.

**I. The Red Flag speaks of Danger.**—There are many danger signals to warn us that death is only removed by a step. Perhaps the most prominent red token is *Conscience*. Conscience is the little voice which says *Stop*, do not do this wicked thing, or you will die.

'It was yielding to the sudden temptation to alter the figures on a cheque that brought me here,' said a young man to me, who was a prisoner in one of His Majesty's prisons. 'Tell the children,' said he, 'not to trifle with sin; it means ruin.'

'Happy the child whose youngest years receive instruction well.'

**II. The Green Flag speaks of Caution.**—A warning. The best token is the Word of God.

The most prominent word in *The Word is Prepare, Be ready*. Remember your mother's three cautions—Don't go without your coat or cloak, or you may take cold; don't walk in the road, or you may be knocked down; don't waste your time, time is money.

It is recorded that when Robert Moffatt took leave of his mother to face the world, he saw she wished to say something but could not. 'What is it, mother,' he said, 'I will do it if I can.' 'I only ask you to read a chapter of the Bible every morning, and another in the evening.' 'Yes, mother, I will certainly do as you desire.' Children, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

**III. The White Flag speaks of Safety.**—White is right. The assurance for a safe journey depends on one thing. It is all in the coupling. No matter how strong the engine, how nicely furnished the carriages may be, how well laid the metals. Good works, clear brains, strong lives will never reach heaven without Christ. He is the coupling that links time to eternity. When the strain came on that train that was recently wrecked, the couplings broke; then came the smash.

No strain can separate us from Christ, whose souls are made white through the blood of the Lamb.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast,  
For my Saviour loves me so, He will hold me fast.

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 48.

PSALM XXI. 4.

JAMES VAUGHAN has the following illustration of this text: 'There was a little boy whom I knew, and he was a very little boy when his mother died, and his

father—a good man, now in India—after her death was one day engaged in family prayer, and reading, and explaining the Bible, and he said, "God gives us anything we ask". And the little boy could not keep silence, but said, "No, papa, God does not give us everything we ask. You know, papa, we asked that God would make mamma *well*. God did not give us what we wanted. We asked God to give her life, but she died! God did *not* give her life." His papa beautifully said, "O my dear boy, remember that verse in the twenty-first Psalm: 'He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life: *even for ever and ever*'. God has answered our prayer. We asked for her life, and 'He has given her length of days, even life for ever and ever'."<sup>5</sup>

## PROVIDENCE

'They looked unto Thee and were delivered.'—PSALM XXII. 5.

**I. I READ** this story once, and I repeat it to you now as one instance of God's answer to prayer.

On the edge of a great forest lived a woodman and his family.

One day a tree fell on the woodman and crushed him badly, and he lay long months in bed. The summer passed, and he was still in bed; then the winter, and the spring.

His family became very poor, every day poorer, until at last they had nothing to eat but what they were permitted to gather in the wood.

One spring morning the mother took her children to the front of the house and knelt down and asked God for bread.

And on that same morning it happened that a painter, going to the wood to paint a picture, saw under the green leaves and shadows of the wood this group kneeling in prayer.

He saw the poor mother and her children kneeling in front of their poor cottage. It was a beautiful sight, and while they prayed he quickly drew a picture of them.

Then, when they rose from prayer, the artist went to the mother and said he would give her a sovereign if she would allow him to remain beside the cottage for a little and take portraits of herself and her children. And she did.

So God heard her prayer. He sent bread that day for the children, the husband, and herself, and by and by her husband was able to go out again and begin work.

I do not know more of this story. But I know this: God sometimes answers prayers in a direct, immediate way.

**II.** When we read of war, we think what a dreadful thing it would be if an army with guns and swords were to land upon our shores and march in upon our towns and our homes.

Well, God's people have often known what that terror was, and many stories are told of how He has sent His angels to deliver them.

I heard a story once of an old lady—and old people are children of God as well as young people—and it

was a time of war, and in her village the word went, 'The Cossacks are coming'. Now the Cossacks were wild, terrible, and cruel soldiers. And all the people fled. But this old lady said, 'I am old and feeble, and cannot flee'. So the neighbours fled and she remained. And the night fell. And she heard the tramp, tramp of the soldiers, but fainter and fainter. They never came; they went into the other houses, but not into hers.

In the morning they were gone. But when she looked out, the country all around was covered with snow, and God had made the snow fall on a hedge between her home and the road. And she knew it was God, for she said, 'Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling His word'.

The snow was God's angel.

Though the night be dark and dreary,  
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;  
Thou art He who, never weary,  
Watchest where Thy people be.  
Though destruction walk around us,  
Though the arrow past us fly,  
Angel-guards from Thee surround us;  
We are safe if Thou art nigh.

III. It happened once in Poland (that too was in a time of war) that a band of soldiers came to a little town, and for some reason the general ordered it to be burned.

But the minister of the church, when the news of that order reached him, took twelve boys from the choir and marched them down to the general's tent and sang a hymn, and the general's heart was moved, and he spared the town. So you see the minister and his choir were like angels of mercy in saving their town.

In a village near Warsaw lived a pious peasant named Dobiny. When he became old and poor he could not pay his rent, and was to be turned out of his home the next day, and it was winter.

As he sat in sorrow the church bells rang for evening prayer, and Dobiny began to sing:—

Commit thou all thy griefs  
And ways into His hands.

And there was a tapping at the window. This was a raven that Dobiny's father had taken from its nest when young, and had tamed.

Dobiny opened the window to let in the raven, and there was a ring set with precious stones in its mouth.

Dobiny took the ring to the minister, and he saw by the crest that it belonged to King Stanislaus, and he took it to the king.

And the king built a house for Dobiny, and took him into his own service, and he never knew want again.

'The raven, the ring, the minister, the king,' these were God's angel-host for Dobiny.

IV. In a humble cottage in a valley in Switzerland, below a great snow-covered mountain, three children happened one night to be left alone. Their mother was dead, their father away on a journey. They were called Robert, Franz, and Theresa.

During the night the children awoke suddenly and cried to each other, 'What is that?' and then dropped off to sleep again.

But by and by they found themselves awake again, and could not sleep. Not a bit of light came through the shutters or the doors. What a dark night it must be! no moon, no stars.

Then Theresa, the eldest, began to tell stories to her two brothers till day should dawn. But for them the day did not dawn. Then Franz was hungry, and the other two were hungry, and Theresa got up and looked about for matches, but could find none. Her father had locked them up, but she found some bread and milk for her brothers.

Then the eldest boy, Robert, said he would look out, so he unbolted the door, and the door seemed to burst open, and a great mass of snow fell in upon him and nearly covered him.

Then the terrible truth flashed on each of them. They were buried in the snow. What awoke them in the night was an avalanche; a mass of snow falling from the mountain had buried their cottage.

Then they cried on their father, but they saw how foolish that was. Then one said, 'Shall he be able to find us?' But Theresa said, 'God knows where we are, and He will not forsake us'.

'If I could only see you!' said little Franz to Theresa. Then they began to pray. But for the most part the children sat holding each other's hands.

Many hours passed. Franz got very hungry, very faint, but he got gentle in his trouble. Robert broke out into a burst of tears, and threw himself crying on the bed.

The hours went past very slowly.

No sun, no moon, no stars. 'Oh, Theresa,' cried little Franz, 'when will the King of Glory pass by?' for now they began to think of death. But just then they all heard a thud upon the roof of the house, then thud upon thud, then a little gleam of light came, then a voice, 'Franz Hofmeister, are you there?' Franz was too weak to reply, but Robert answered with a great shout:—

'Yes, neighbour Ulric, we are all here.'

And by and by neighbour Ulric and other friends had made a way to the door, and were in and had the children in their arms.

And soon they were carried out to their father, who, afraid lest they might be dead, had not strength to go near.

'Thank Ulric, our good neighbour,' said the father. Franz put his arms round Ulric's neck and pressed a kiss on his cheek, and said, 'Thanks, dear Ulric: I will never forget you'.

And these children never did forget their deliverer. They were buried.

They were raised again.

It was a resurrection.

They kept the day as a day of thanksgiving ever after year by year all their life.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 139.



## THE BIBLE TELESCOPE

'I will declare Thy name unto my brethren : in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.'—PSALM XXII. 22.

THE TELESCOPE, you know, is an instrument which makes things which are really far off appear as if they were near. And this Psalm, and indeed the whole Bible for that matter, makes the life and death and resurrection of Jesus seem quite near to us, although these great events took place hundreds of miles away, and hundreds of years ago. When we want to see Jesus clearly and distinctly, we must look through the *Bible telescope*.

One thing leads to another, and the thought of the telescope set my mind thinking of some other glasses, or optical instruments, to which the Bible might be compared, and these, including the telescope, are four in number.

**I. The Telescope.**—The telescope helps us to see afar off. You are at the coast, and with your naked eye you see a speck on the horizon; but when you look at it through the telescope, lo and behold, it becomes a big steamer, and you see the smoke! The astronomer at the Paisley Observatory showed me through his beautiful telescope the planet Jupiter. To the naked eye it only looked like a bright star, but through the telescope it looked like a little round moon, and by its side were three little moons or satellites, and its fourth moon had got in the way of the telescope and threw its shadow, which looked like a little spot of sticking-plaster right on the middle of the planet's bright face. What a wonderful instrument the telescope is.

And is not the Bible like the telescope, as it shows us Jesus hanging on the cross with His hands and feet pierced for us, and His garments parted among the soldiers?

And then we can use the telescope to look forward and upward; and so, later in the Psalm, we see Jesus as King on the throne, and surrounded by worshipping nations. 'All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the governor among the nations' (ver. 27).

**II. The Microscope.**—Of course you have looked through a microscope or magnifying-glass. It makes things which are very small appear large. Have you looked at an old cheese, and seen the little mites, which appear like grey powder, running about like the ants in an ant-hill? Have you seen the animalcule in water, which are invisible to the naked eye, twisting and wriggling about like little worms? Have you seen the tongue of a fly, and the sting of a bee, and how beautifully these are finished by the wisdom and power of God? The microscope shows the plan and meaning of the most minute objects.

And the Bible is like a microscope, for it shows us the plan and meaning of the little things in the life and death of Jesus. As we read the Bible they seem to become larger and more beautiful and more full of meaning. The little word '*I thirst*' not only tells

us that Jesus was thirsty on the cross, but reminds us that He was really and truly man, and that He can sympathise and feel with us when we are thirsty or in pain or trouble, and that the words of our Psalm were fulfilled: 'My strength is dried up like a potherb; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death'.

**III. The Stereoscope.**—Many of you have one at home. It is generally made like a wooden box with two glasses for the two eyes to look through. A card is put in with two photographs of the same object side by side, and the object appears not flat as in the photograph, but solid. The Greek word '*stereos*' means solid.

And the Bible is like a stereoscope. It gives us four pictures of Jesus Christ by the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The pictures are the same in the main, but a little different in detail. Then, as we look at them attentively, and combine them together, they seem to make Jesus stand out before us as a solid figure, not merely like one we have read of in a book, but one whom we have seen with our eyes, and could handle with our hands, as we do our nearest and dearest friends.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 135.

## COURAGE

'Be of good courage.'—PSALM XXVII. 14.

WHAT do we mean by courage? Of course you will say, and quite rightly too, not being afraid. Now there are two kinds of courage—one we call bodily courage, that is, not being afraid of pain or even death.

Let me tell you a story of some men who showed great bodily courage. Many hundred years ago, a King of Persia, called Xerxes, invaded Greece with an immense army and marched down the Eastern coast till he came to a place called Thermopylae, where there was a very narrow valley through which he had to pass in order to get into southern Greece. But at the entrance of the valley he found a small Greek army commanded by the King of Sparta, whose name was Leonidas. This General had only about seven thousand men altogether, and just three hundred of his own subjects. Xerxes sent a messenger ordering Leonidas to give up his arms.

'Come and take them,' was his answer. And this Xerxes set out to do, and for five days tried to fight his way through the narrow valley, but all in vain. The brave Leonidas and his little army fought so fiercely that Xerxes was always defeated with heavy loss.

At last a man, who I am sorry to say was a Greek, came and told the King of Persia of a way over the mountain to the other end of the valley.

'Follow me,' said he, 'and I will show you how to overcome these few Greeks.'

Leonidas, however, heard that the Persians were coming round to the other end of the entrance of the valley, and that he would at last be quite surrounded by his enemies. Now what did he do? Run away

before the valley was blocked up? No, he was too brave for that. He asked his three hundred Spartans what they would do, and they shouted, 'Conquer or die'. Then he let all those who wanted to do so make their escape in time, and at last was left with just two thousand men.

What was the end of these brave men? They didn't wait to be attacked, but rushed on the Persians, and for a long time kept their ranks unbroken. At last, however, Leonidas and most of his men were killed, and the few who were left, worn out with fatigue and wounds, withdrew into the valley, seated themselves on a little hill, and calmly waited the approach of their enemies. They hadn't long to wait, soon they were surrounded by the Persians, and at last not one of these noble men was left alive. They showed, all of them, true bodily courage.

And I think our English soldiers and sailors are quite as brave as these Spartans were—they, too, are always ready to face death.

But there is another kind of courage which even the bravest soldiers and sailors do not always show. What is that courage called? I think you all know we call it moral courage. Bodily courage is not being afraid of what men will do to us, and moral courage is showing no fear of what people may say or think of us—and this is the best kind of courage.

Let us learn to fear God, and then we shall be afraid of nothing else. Let us ask Him to give us His grace day by day, to love and serve Him, and then we shall be able to be brave and strong in the cause of truth and right, whatever men may say or do to us.

We want, like Joseph, to be brave in the hour of temptation and say, 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'

We want, like Daniel, to be brave and faithful to God in the midst of opposition, and say to the world and the devil, when others are grovelling before some false god, 'We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up'.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 44.

### TRESPASSING

'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgivest the iniquity of my sin.'—PSALM XXXII. 5.

As you walk along the road you often see a long pole with a board, on which these words are painted, 'Trespassers will be punished according to Law'. The road is the King's highway, and is perfectly free to you. Nobody can blame you for walking along it. But the field on the other side of the hedge belongs to the landlord, and he can do what he likes with his own property. If you step over into it you break the law of the land, and may be punished for it. God has fenced in with laws a highway along which we are to walk in life's journey. He has made us and all things, and has every right in the world to lay down laws for us. We are under His laws, and we can never get away from them. We might as easily escape from the air or from our-

selves as escape from God's laws, which belong to our very being. Sin is a breaking of these laws, and so it is often called a transgression or trespass.

May the gracious Spirit help me to explain the words of David which we have read. They tell us—

I. What Sin is; and,

II. How to get rid of it

I. **What Sin is.**—The Apostle John writes, 'Sin is the transgression of the law' (1 John iii. 4). But what law is meant? God has many laws—laws for the stars, the tides, the spring, and for everything. But among all these there is one that is the law of laws, and it is here called *the law*. It binds man to love and serve God. This law is as old as man, for it was in him when he was born; and it is written in the hearts of all men as well as in the Word of God. When we speak of the law, we usually mean the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Around that rugged and awful mountain all the children of Israel were gathered. Bounds were set round about, through which none should pass on pain of death. God descended upon the mountain amid thunderings and lightnings and clouds; the mount quaked, and the people trembled. Thus with every sign of majesty was the law given; for the law is the most solemn thing in the world for sinful men. The Commandments were written by the finger of God upon two tables of stone. They declare what we should be and do toward God and men. As ten shillings are summed up in the piece of gold we call a half-sovereign, so the Ten Commandments are all summed up in one golden rule: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself'. In His Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour teaches that the law has to do chiefly with our spirits. It goes into all the hidden corners of our hearts, and judges our most secret thoughts. It condemns evil desires quite as much as evil actions. The law is like the boundary set round about Mount Sinai when God spake to Moses. It is a sacred line drawn by God, fencing off forbidden things. Thus the Bible very often calls sin a trespass or transgression. These two words mean the very same thing—stepping over a line, or breaking through a fence, or crossing a boundary. I remember a thrilling account of a crew who had despaired of saving their ship. In their frenzy many of the sailors wished to take possession of the stores, that they might drown their fears with strong drink. The captain, with a drawn sword, stood on a line running across the deck, and a merciful severity threatened to cut down the first man who crossed it. The sailor who dared to step over that line disobeyed his captain, and became a transgressor. The first sin makes my meaning very plain. God drew a line with His law around one tree. Adam and Eve might roam at pleasure through the rest of the garden, only they were not to go over the sacred, though unseen, fence around that one tree. But they broke

through it, and became sinners. 'The first sin was 'the transgression of the law'. And, like every sin, it was also rebellion against God. For the law and the Lawgiver cannot be separated. It is a dreadful thing to break the law of the land; for all the rulers are behind the law, and they seize the law-breaker, and take him to prison and punishment. But to break God's law—what shall we say about that? A minister, who lay for some months on his death-bed, wrote to his friends, that he felt like a man on whom the great eye of the holy God was resting. For months he had to look straight into that piercing eye. Though he had lived a blameless life, he felt that he was a miserable sinner, and that every hope of heaven would have perished in his heart, had it not been for the mercy of the Saviour. Every one who knows God's law has the same feeling. His prayer is, God be merciful to me the sinner.

Sin is also a *debt*. In repeating the Lord's Prayer, you sometimes say 'forgive us our trespasses,' and sometimes 'forgive us our debts'. Christ has given us both these words. Sin is, as to the act, a trespass; and, as to the result of it, a debt which brings punishment upon men. You know what sin is when you know the meaning of a trespass and a debt. A debt is what is due. Sin is nothing else than not to give God His due. Duties not done are debts not paid. Trespassing often brings men into debt, and it is our trespassing that has caused all our debts to the holy Lord. Oh, what a curse debt is! How its hated burden crushes a man's heart. Debt is a thing of the past; you cannot see it, or touch it with your finger, and say, 'there it is'; yet it is a reality. You remember the first picture in the *Pilgrim's Progress*—poor Christian with the big burden on his back. That mysterious burden is made up by his sins or his spiritual debts. It is the strange thing called *guilt* that makes him so miserable. Oh! who will take the burden off?

Your debts are very great. Every time you have passed over God's sacred boundary line you have added to the black list. Your evil words and thoughts, your failures to love God and man as you ought, are more than misfortunes, or weaknesses, or blots. All these are not only shameful, but also sinful. Though we may have forgotten our debts, a correct account of them has been kept in the book above. No false entries there; the recording angel makes no mistake. You are drowned in debt. Were you to call in all your old debts, you would confess with David that they are more than the hairs on your head. In one of his parables (Matt. xviii. 23), our Saviour likens the sinner to a king's servant who owed ten thousand talents, that is, more than three millions of pounds sterling. But he was a very poor man and could not pay one farthing of it. He was a hopeless bankrupt till his Lord freely forgave him the mighty sum. That is exactly our case. 'This is the very first lesson we learn in Christ's school—that we have many trespasses, and that it is for ever impossible for us to pay our debts. People

talk about reforming and turning over a new leaf. But what are we to do with the old leaves—these bungled, blotted, shameful leaves which make up the book of our past. Oh, these debts! It is a blessed thing to believe fully that you have not a penny of your own to meet them with. Until you know this, you are like a boy trying to spell forgiveness, who yet does not know his A B C. When you know it, you are in the fair-way of learning what is next to be done. You will then be eager to know—

**II. How to get Rid of Sin.**—'We all need to settle our accounts with God betimes,' a man once said to his dying brother, who replied, 'I know no way, my dear brother, to settle accounts with God, but by receiving a free pardon through my Redeemer'. In order to get rid of sin something is needed on our part, and something on God's part; you must confess, and God must forgive. 'I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.'

*You must confess.*—Nothing can be done till we own our guilt. You have seen a bad boy disgraced, and put out of the room; and afterwards you have seen him pardoned. But he had first to confess his fault, and say he was sorry for it, and ask to be forgiven. Your mother never gives you the kiss of forgiveness till you have confessed your sin. Pardon without confession would be an encouragement to sin, and it would utterly destroy a parent's authority. Now our Heavenly Father never pardons His sinning children till they have sincerely confessed all their transgressions. Millions of transgressors have been pardoned, but not one of them without confession. Every one of them has said with the prodigal, 'Father, I have sinned'. For some time after his shameful sin, David, as he tells us in this Psalm, did not confess his transgressions. He wished, if it were possible, to cheat God and man about it; there was guile in his spirit. He 'kept silence' (ver. 3). That means a great deal more than that he was silent. He was like a stubborn boy who sullenly stiffens himself up and determines not to yield. His soul then grew so wretched under sin known but unconfessed that he fell into ill-health. 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old . . . my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.' But at last he frankly owns his sins and spreads them all out before God. 'I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.'

As the shining stars are in the sky for multitude, so are the words of forgiveness in the Bible. Here is another of them: 'Having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross' (Col. ii. 13). Accounts were written then on slate-like little tables filled with wax. When the debt was paid, by rubbing the wax quite smooth the handwriting was blotted out, so that no trace of it remained. The wax tables were then laid by for future use. There was a handwriting against Christ's people, which was contrary to them, for whichever way they turned it met them



like a horrid spectre. But God our Saviour has blotted out the handwriting and nailed it to His cross, like an old account discharged in full.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Echoes*, p. 33.

### BITS AND BRIDLES

'Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, else they will not come near unto thee.'—PSALM XXXII. 9.

I. How can a child be like a horse or a mule? There is all the difference in the world between children and horses. When you draw a boy on your slate, and then draw a horse, the boy perhaps is not very like any boy you ever saw, or indeed that anybody else ever saw; nor is the horse like any horse that ever drew a carriage, or carried a rider. Still, even on paper, there is all the difference in the world between a horse and a boy. No one draws quite so badly that he has to write 'Boy' under one figure and 'Horse' under the other, for fear people should mistake one for the other.

And yet, though so unlike each other in most things, this text hints that a child can be like a horse; in fact, that children and grown-up people are in great *danger* of being like horses and mules. It tells us too in what way. It says that horses have no understanding, and must be held in with bit and bridle if you want to stop or turn them. They have to be *forced* to do things. Their rider has to *make* them go, *make* them stop, and *make* them turn round. Some of them can, no doubt, be made to understand and obey words and signs. Yet, however good and gentle a horse is, you never see men riding or driving without bridles, because there is not understanding enough in the horse to obey mere words. His master has very often to *make* him do things.

Well, are not men often like their horses in this? Have *they* not to be held in with bit and bridle? But you will say, We never saw a man with a bit in his mouth. Perhaps not—but did you never see a policeman walking up and down a street? Now, what do the policemen in our streets mean? They mean that there are a great many men, and women too, in this country who will not leave people or things alone—who will not be honest, or quiet, or sober, unless they are *forced*. They are like the horse and the mule. They have to be *held in* by bit and bridle.

Did you ever see a gaol? A great, big, dark house with a high wall going all round it, with heavy chains hanging over its great thick door? Now, what does the gaol mean? What do those chains mean? They mean that here in England to-day there are people so dangerous to other people that they have to be shut up in gaols, and held fast by chains to keep them from doing harm.

Did you ever see a soldier? Oh yes, scores of soldiers! You like to see them, don't you? Yet a soldier, for all his fine uniform, is a sad sight. For what do soldiers mean? That there are still many

people in the world—outside our land, and inside too—who will not behave themselves peacefully and honestly unless they are *made* to do so by sheer force.

So, although you never see men and women going about with *horses'* bridles over their heads or *horses'* bits in their mouths, there are a great many who have to be held in and kept quiet with bridles that are very much stronger and more shameful.

And not only grown-up people; children at home and in school very often—much, much too often—are like little horses and mules, who won't do right, or go right, unless they are *made* to.

Did you ever see a cane in your school?

Do you ever hear of 'lines' and 'impositions,' and of being 'kept in'?

Yes, I am sure you have. Well, what are these things? They are the bits and bridles with which boys and girls have to be driven and guided when they behave as horses do.

How often does a mother or a nurse have to say sadly, 'These children won't do what they are told unless I *threaten* them!' And that means that the children, like mules, only move at the sound of the whip, and only stop at the pull of the bridle.

II. But now perhaps some boy or girl will say, 'Well, after all, a horse that obeys the bridle is not a bad horse, and a child that does what he is told, although he has to be told several times, is not a *very* bad child'.

No, he is not very bad—yet—but he will soon be, if he does not alter.

Bits and bridles can keep horses in the right way; but men and women, boys and girls, cannot be made good, or kept good, against their own wishes.

A policeman can, perhaps, stop a thief from stealing; but all the policemen in the world cannot stop him from *wanting* to steal, and so long as a man *wants* to steal he is a bad man—a thief in his heart, whether his hands take things or not.

Gaols and gaolers can keep people from *doing* wrong, but not from *being* wrong. The cane in school may keep you from hitting another boy, but it can't make you leave off hating him in your heart.

Men are not good unless their hearts are good; that is, unless they do good because they love goodness, and leave off doing bad things because they hate sin with all their might.

A man who does not do bad deeds only because he is afraid of being punished is really a bad man, and most likely some day he will be so tempted as to forget his fear and do the bad deeds.

And a child who in school only obeys the cane, and at home does things in a sulky, pouting way, may not *yet* be a very bad child, but he is most certainly on the way to become a really wicked man.

Therefore the text says, 'Be ye not as the horse or the mule'.

III. How, then, should we be guided? By something that God has put into each one of us for that purpose. The text calls it 'understanding'. It is a

rather long word, but I think you all know what it means. It is the real difference between men and animals.

No man would say to the best horse in the world, 'Now, I want you to take me to the bookseller's, then to the grocer's and the chemist's, and then to the railway station'; because no horse could *understand*—could know what it all meant. He could never go to all these places of himself. He has to be guided by bit and bridle.

But a child *understands*: he knows what words mean; he knows, too, right from wrong, and he knows God's will about them.

You know love from hate, truth from falsehood, good from bad, and you know perfectly well and at once, each time these things come before you, which you ought to choose. You know quite well that you ought to do right always; and the more you do what you ought, the more easily and plainly will you see what is right in every case.

**Right is God's Will.**—There was once a great temple with a wonderful image in it. And the wonderful thing about the image was this, that to whatever part of the temple men went, the eyes of the image seemed to be looking at them and watching them. Of course the idol could not see anything *really*. But in the verse before the text, God says, 'I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee'. God really sees us. From every commandment in the Bible, from the life of Jesus Christ, from every right and good thing that comes in our way, God's eye looks out upon us and counsels us, tells us what to do and how to do it.

And God's eye upon us should be enough for us. Our knowledge of right and wrong should be enough. There should be no need of bit and bridle of any sort for us. We should be not horses that obey the bridle, but children that obey from the heart. Pray God, then, to keep you from being like the horse or the mule, and to help you always to be imitators of God as beloved children, walking in love, as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for you. Amen.—J. MORGAN GIBBON, *In the Days of Youth*, p. 21.

#### A BRIGHT BIT

'The horse must be held in with bit and bridle.'—PSALM XXXII. 9.

*Object*—A horse's bit.

I AM wondering if you little folks can tell me what single word this object which I hold in my hand represents. It is one of the most important words for boys and girls—'tis OBEEDIENCE.

**I. Obedience Needed in a Soldier.**—As you pass the soldiers' drill ground, a sharp word falls upon your ear: it is *Attention!* As quickly as the word is spoken there is a response—every man listening for the next word.

An instance is given in the life of a great soldier, how that he with others was following with a hunting party and that they were confronted by a gate before which stood a farm boy to protect the field.

The company demanded that the gate be opened. Whereupon the brave boy refused to allow anyone to pass. 'But I am the Duke of Wellington.' 'I care not,' said the boy, 'I gave my word none should pass; I will break my word for none.'

**II. Obedience Needed in the Home.**—Sometimes in the midst of play a call comes to do something or to go on an errand. A shrug of the shoulders, a cloudy look, a sharp reply, 'I can't come now!'

This act of disobedience may cost some one pain, and even their life. Delays are dangerous. When a lad was told there was no need to perform an act of unpleasant service, he replied to the tempter, 'My father gave me command; I must honour his word.'

Children! the first command with promise is, 'Honour thy Father and Mother that thy days may be long in the land!'

**III. Obedience is God's first Demand of Man.** This was the only safe condition in the Garden of Eden. By disobedience Adam fell. By obedience Christ saves. 'I must do the will of Him that sent Me.' At Cana of Galilee, where Christ performed His first miracle, the Mother of our Lord said to the waiting servants at the wedding feast, 'Whosoever He saith unto you, do it'.

Everywhere He leads me I will follow on.

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 72.

#### O TASTE AND SEE

'O taste and see.'—PSALM XXXIV. 8.

SOMETIMES, when the Jews had a sacrifice, after the sacrifice they had a feast—a holy feast; and at the feast they passed round a cup of wine. First, the master of the feast drank, and he gave it to the next, and asked him to drink a little drop; then the next, and the next; and so it passed round the whole company. 'O taste and see.'

There is a little about this in the eleventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians; but I will not stop to look at it now.

I have brought a cup to you to-day—a wonderful cup. It was not always sweet; it was a very bitter cup for somebody; and He said, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'. But the wonderful thing is, because He drank it, it has become a sweet cup to everybody else—so sweet to those who drink it.

Do you know what that 'cup' is? We'll call it 'the cup of salvation'. 'O taste and see.' And I am the cup-bearer. The cup-bearer was required to 'taste' first. I hope I have tasted. I have not tasted it so much as I ought to have done; but I hope I can say, I have tasted it a little. I have tasted it enough to say to all of you, 'O taste and see'.

Religion is a thing that all must try for themselves. Everybody in this church is old enough to try for himself or herself. There are some things, you know, you can't try for yourselves: you must believe them, because you are told of them by your father or mother. You must believe them, because somebody

else has told you. That is not the case with religion. Everybody is old enough—the youngest boy or girl in this church is old enough—to try for himself or herself. You must try for yourselves. ‘O taste and see.’ Don’t believe it because I say it, or anybody else says it; but try for yourselves, ‘Taste and see.’

Can you think of any persons who did try for themselves? I will point you to three.

Look at the first chapter of St. John and the forty-sixth verse, ‘And Nathanael said unto him (Philip), Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.’ Try for yourself. Judge for yourself. And he did so. Do you think Nathanael was ever sorry he did ‘taste and see’?

Will you turn to another? John iv. 42. It is about the Samaritans; and they came to the woman and said unto her, ‘Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ They tasted and saw for themselves.

Now look at one more. Acts xvii. 11. It is about the people of Berea—let us all read it: ‘These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.’

So I want to begin by saying this—that I want everybody not to take it for granted because I preach it; but all persons ought to try for themselves whether God’s word is true, and whether it is so happy a thing to be religious. Let them try.

Now I am going to tell you a few things which I wish you to try. What shall we think of, first, that it is well to try, and ‘taste’?

‘Prayer.’ But perhaps you say, ‘I have prayed, and I have not found it so very nice.’ Perhaps not. Perhaps it has been because you have not prayed. You have knelt down: you have said some words; but perhaps you have never really prayed. I will tell you, presently, what I want you to do about prayer. But first I will tell you about a man who did ‘taste and see,’ and found how sweet a thing it was to pray. It is a true story.

One Saturday evening a clergyman (whom I know very well) went from Cowes to Southampton, and he arrived late at Southampton, and he had to go on to preach at Winchester the next morning. The coach was gone—this happened a long time ago—therefore he could not go on that night—he might have gone on the next morning, but that being Sunday, he thought would not be right. He rang the bell and ordered the waiter to get him a gig, that he might drive on to Winchester that night. When he got into the gig he was tired, and he put his cloak around him, and thought he would rest a little by going to sleep. But the thought came into his mind that it would not be right. ‘Here is the man who is driving me, and I ought to try to do him good: for it says, “Be instant, in season and out of season.” When I

am preaching to-morrow it will be “in season,” now it would be “out of season.”’

So he said to the man, ‘What is your name?’ ‘John Butler,’ was the reply. ‘Do you know Winchester?’ ‘Brought up there,’ said he. ‘Do you always drive a gig?’ ‘Yes, sir, always.’ ‘Did you ever go to school?’ ‘For a short time, sir; but I was never much of a *scholar*.’ ‘Then, I suppose,’ said the clergyman, ‘you can’t read the Bible?’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘You go to church, I suppose, and hear the Bible read there?’ ‘No, sir, because of my gig. We come home late Saturday night, and have to clean the harness, and get the gig ready—for people would not like a dirty gig.’ ‘Could not you do that on Monday morning?’ ‘No, sir; because I should lose the best day in the week for business: Sunday’s the best day!’ ‘Ah!’ said the clergyman, ‘it may be the best for your pocket, and your master’s, but it is not the best for your soul. It would be better if you were to give up Sunday work and go to church. Do you ever pray?’ ‘No, I don’t know how. I used to be able to pray when a little boy, but I have forgotten it all now.’ Said the clergyman, ‘I will teach you.’ ‘No, I can’t remember it,’ said the man. ‘Well, try; it shall be a short prayer—only twelve words—I will teach you to learn it. Now, John, the prayer is this, “O Lord God, for Jesus Christ’s sake, give me Thy Holy Spirit”. That is not very long. I think you might learn it three words at a time—“O Lord God”—“For Jesus Christ’s”—“Sake, give me”—“Thy Holy Spirit”. Do you understand it?’

And then the clergyman tried to make him understand it. I will not stop to explain that now; but when he had done this, he said, ‘John, it is a prayer you can say when you are cleaning the harness, and driving the gig. You can say it on Sundays and on weekdays—with your heart, if not with your lips.’ The clergyman, having said thus, felt tired, and leaned back in the gig; he did not go to sleep, but he prayed God to bless what he had said to the poor man.

By and by they reached Winchester; and as they drove into the town, John said, ‘I have said the prayer a great many times, sir; will you hear me?’ Then he repeated it quite perfectly. Then the clergyman said, ‘Now, John, remember and say it constantly.’ ‘Yes, sir,’ said John. And so they parted.

A great many years passed away, when, one day, the same clergyman went back to Southampton; and as he was walking out, he saw a board on a house—‘John Butler. Carriages, horses, and gigs for hire.’ He thought, ‘I wonder whether this is my old friend; I will go and knock at the door.’ A respectable woman opened it. ‘Does John Butler live here?’ ‘He has gone to the stables, sir,’ was the reply, ‘but I will send for him at once.’ When he came in and saw the clergyman, he looked at him very hard, and soon recognised him. ‘Beant you the gentleman I drove to Winchester some time ago?’ ‘Yes, my friend.’ ‘Then, sir, let me tell you, I have cause to bless God for that drive! I am happier now than



then.' 'Then,' said the clergyman, 'I tell us all about it—how it happened.' 'Well, sir, I said that prayer everywhere, at all times. I was always saying it. At first it did not do me any good, but only made me more unhappy. But I went on saying it. One day I passed a church, and I went in, and the minister was just beginning his sermon, and he said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin!" And that sermon made me so happy. A load fell off my mind. From that time I never drove my gig on a Sunday. God has prospered me. I have a nice wife, nice children, and plenty of money for everything I want' . . . He tasted a little sip of prayer, and he found the good of it.

Now I will tell you what to do about prayer. Have you ever done it? Find out in the Bible some promise—any promise you like—then go to God with that promise. Say, 'Now, Lord, here is this promise. Thou hast put it into the Bible. I am sure it is true. Now, Lord, I have come to ask that this promise may be true to me; that I may enjoy it for Christ's sake. Let it be good to me.' 'O taste and see.' Try; and I promise you if you will try, you will 'see'—not, perhaps, all in a minute—you may have to wait a little; but if you go on waiting and praying, you will 'see' presently.

Now I will go on to another thing I want you to 'taste and see.' Read the Bible. I do not know whether all are in the habit (as many as can read) of reading a little bit of the Bible every day. Perhaps, if you do, you are saying, 'I do not find it so pleasant'. I will tell you what somebody said, it was 'better than tasting honey'. He said that twice, if not three times—in Psalms xix. and cxix. This he said of only a portion of the Bible—the Pentateuch—he had not so much as we have. 'Sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb.' We should not, perhaps, say those first five books were the sweetest, but he thought so.

I should like to tell you about a very great man—I have told you about a poor man, John Butler, now I will tell you about a great man who lived eleven hundred years ago—his name was 'Bede'—The Venerable Bede—a learned and a good man. When Bede was a boy he began to love his Bible—mark that! and he loved it so that he read it every day of his life, and I will tell you how much he loved it. He had a long illness when an old man; and a clergyman—called a 'scholar' in those days—writes word that for fifty days they took in turns to read the Bible together. He says, 'We read and wept, and wept and read'—they never read without weeping, not unhappy tears, but sweet tears—'We read and wept, and wept and read for fifty days, and when we had done reading, we wept'.

Bede, holy man! was translating the gospel, the Greek version into Old English—he began before his illness, but finished it in his illness: when he came to the last chapter, he said to the young clergyman who was reading it to him, 'We have reached the last chapter. You must write fast—for I am soon going.

I hope God will spare me to finish it. It is such a happy task!' He wrote on and on; at last the young man said, 'We have come to the last verse, sir.' 'Oh! have we? "the last verse!" Go on; go on; I am soon going; but I hope God will spare me to finish the last verse!' At length the young man said, 'It is finished! it is finished!' Said Bede, 'Good words—my Lord—it is finished. All is finished for me. O blessed Bible—sweet Bible!—I should like to get out of bed (the old man said) and sit in that chair where I have often been so happy in reading that Bible!' They lifted him into the chair, and when there, he folded his hands and said, 'Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace, good will toward men'. His head sank—and such was the end of the Venerable Bede!

I do not say you will always find reading the Bible so pleasant—because some things we must do as a duty, and they become pleasant as we go on. I have found that in reading the Bible; do it as a duty, and the pleasure will follow. 'O taste and see.'

Now I want to go on to another thing. Some of you won't understand me when I say the pleasantest thing in all the world is to feel forgiven—to feel God loves you. 'My sins are forgiven. God loves me.' It is the happiest feeling anybody ever has this side of heaven. Do you know it? I wish you did. The thought that Jesus Christ has forgiven you. 'O taste and see'

I will tell you about a boy who did 'taste and see'. The boy is called Sam Williams; in the same class at school with him was Jonathan Hardy. One day Jonathan walked out into the fields, and was not at all happy in his mind. He felt vexed about things. Sam overtook Jonathan, and said, 'I am happy, very happy'. 'I am not happy,' said Jonathan, 'I wonder what has made you happy?' 'I will tell you,' said Sam. 'God has forgiven me. I used to be unhappy. I was very cross and irritable—envid everybody—the squire his fine place, my master, and everybody! and I was cross at home: till one day I came home from work, and opened my Bible on the word "happy". I looked at the word. Who is "happy"? How are we to be "happy"? Then I looked at the words, "A-k, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". Sitting over my Bible a long time, I thought I should like to be "happy". I tried to pray; but could not find anything to say. At last I said, "God be merciful to me a sinner". Again and again I said this. I came downstairs—no happier. I went about as usual and felt very miserable. I thought of all my sins; all sorts of things came into my mind; how, when a boy, I used to sit in that horrid "Black Horse Inn," and laugh at all good people, and good things. They seemed like a great mountain, and a voice said, "You are too bad ever to be forgiven! You are lost!" All this I felt. I was miserable. I went on thinking about these things and could get no comfort. One day I went to church—for the first time for a long while, and heard those words, "Believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved". That would do all: that is the way to be "happy". I looked to that Saviour: the burden fell from me. I have been a "happy" boy since. Now, Jonathan, you are unhappy—do the same, and see if it does not make you happy too.'

That was the sense of forgiveness. The load fell off, and he was happy. You are not 'happy'; not because you have difficult lessons, or trials, or disappointments, or pain! but it is because your sins are not forgiven; or you do not know that your sins are forgiven. You do not carry about with you the idea that God loves you. 'O taste and see;' don't take it at my word; but 'taste and see' for yourselves.

Now another thing. It is a happy thing to conquer one's sins; to keep one's heart clear. It is a pleasant thing to weed a garden; but the pleasantest of all is to keep your heart free from weeds.

I should like to tell you about Jerry. Little Jerry was a very little fellow; he had a good mother who used to read the Bible to him; and the part he liked most was about little Samuel: and Jerry used to say, 'I wonder whether God will ever call me—how I would jump up if He did'. 'But Jerry,' said his mother, 'God does speak to you.' 'Does God speak in my ears?' 'No, but your heart has ears; and God speaks to the ears of your heart, and He says, "Jerry," when you are going to do something naughty—"Jerry, that's wrong—Jerry, stop!"' He said to his mother, 'Does God say that to all people?' 'Yes, but most of all to little children.' She was quite right; because when people grow up to be men and women, God does not say it so often, if they have not listened when little children. 'Most of all to little children.'

But I am sorry to tell you Jerry had a fault—he was greedy, and he liked nice things too much, and sometimes he would do what was wrong to get nice things. Everybody knew that he was rather a greedy boy. Soon after this conversation, Jerry came home very hungry indeed; and he came up to his elder sister, called 'Nancy,' and said, 'I am very hungry'. She said, 'You may go to mother's cupboard, and there you will find an apple—eat that; that will do for you till mother comes home'. When he went to the cupboard to get the apple, he saw there, among many other things, such a nice plum cake, beautiful plums, a great deal of sugar over it; it was cut, and the knife in the plate was dirty; no one would find out if he took a little bit, and a voice said, 'Take a bit, Jerry. Be quick. Take it, Jerry, take it!' Just as he was going to take it, another voice said, 'Jerry! Jerry!' and he listened; and he thought of Samuel, and of what his mother said; and he slammed-to the door, and ran off as fast as he could.

When he went to bed at night, his mother came to kiss him and tuck him up, and he said to her, 'Mother, I have had such a wicked voice come to my heart, and such a good voice—and God helped me, and I obeyed the good voice, it seemed to say, "Jerry!

Jerry!" I did not eat the cake; but I tasted something sweeter than the cake.' . . . 'O taste and see.' Now you 'taste and see' whether it is not sweeter than anything to conquer sin!

Now I must go on to another thing. I am going to mention two more; we have had prayer—the Bible—feeling that we are forgiven, and conquering sin—we'll have two more if you please: the next thing I am going to mention is a very happy thing if you will try it—Work, work.

Will you remember this? Light in the head—love in the heart—work in the fingers. Light in the head—that is knowledge, wisdom: that will not do without love in the heart; and that will not do without work in the fingers. I know people that have light and love, but no work—therefore they are not happy; but these three things will make anybody happy. Light in the head: plenty of love in the heart: love to God, and man; plenty of good works for the fingers. That is the way to be happy. Do something useful. Be kind. Do good to somebody.

A poor man came home one day and brought five peaches: nice, beautiful peaches. He had four sons; he gave one to each and one to his wife. He did not say anything, but just gave them. At night he came home again, and then he said, 'How were the peaches—all nice?' I will tell you what each of the four boys said.

The eldest boy said, 'Oh yes, father, delicious. I ate my peach, and then I took the stone very carefully, and went and planted it in the garden, that we may have another peach-tree some day.' 'Well,' said the father, 'very prudent; look out for the future.'

Then the little boy said, 'Oh father, 'twas exceedingly nice. I ate all mine, and mother gave me half hers, and I threw away the stone.' 'Well,' said the father, 'I am glad you liked it, but perhaps if you had been a little older, you would have acted differently.'

The second boy said, 'Yes, father, I will tell you what I did with mine; I picked up the stone my little brother threw away, broke it, and ate the kernel; I enjoyed that exceedingly; but I did not eat my peach, I sold it. I could buy a dozen peaches with what I got for it.' The father said, 'That may be right, but I think it was a little covetous.'

Then he said to the third boy, 'Well, Edward, what did you do with your peach?' Edward came forward reluctantly; but in answer to his father he replied, 'I took it to poor little George who is sick down the lane. He would not take it, so I left the peach on his bed and ran away.'

Which of the four peaches was sweetest? 'Taste and see' the way to enjoy anything.

Now, one more thing. Everything is sweet till you have tasted a sweeter. The pleasures of the world are sweet to people who have never tasted religion; but people who have tasted Divine pleasures care not much for the pleasures of the world. I have known people religious all their lives who have never tasted the pleasures of the world; and I have known people

worldly all their lives who never tasted the pleasures of religion; and I have known persons who have tasted the pleasures of the world one portion of their lives, and the pleasures of religion the other portion; and I have never known persons who have tasted both but have said, 'The pleasures of religion are the sweetest'. And they can give the best opinion. Everybody must say heavenly pleasures are better than earthly ones.

I must tell you something—not exactly a story, but something like one—and I hope you will understand it. It is not true.

There was a man who once lived in a place where, close to his house, he had a spring of water. At a little distance from him there was another spring. We'll call the spring close to his house 'the nether spring,' the lower spring; and the other, a little way off, 'the upper spring.' So he had 'the nether' and 'the upper' spring.

The 'nether spring' looked very pleasant when the sun was shining, the water sparkled in its rays; yet, when looked at more closely, the water was black and dark, and very often got muddy, and the flowers on the side of it never lasted long; and people who drank a great deal of the water from the 'nether' spring seemed to grow sick.

The other spring a little way off came out of the rock; it required a great deal of patience to get it; but if the cup was held long enough it would always get filled, and you were never sick from it.

Now this man who lived in the cottage near 'the nether spring' always went to it, he did not like the trouble of going to 'the upper spring'. He had not sufficient patience. So it went on for many years.

At last he came to 'the nether spring' and it was dry, not a drop of water in it—all dry. So he was obliged to go to 'the upper spring'; he had to wait some time, and at last he had a cup of nice, pure water. It was so sweet, and he enjoyed it much. He never before tasted such water.

The 'nether spring' flowed on again, but ever after he went to the 'upper'; and when asked why he went so far he said, 'I cannot leave the upper spring; having once tasted it I cannot go back to the nether spring.' 'O taste and see.'

I do not think you quite understand it. You do a little. Try to understand it fully. 'Taste and see.'

So you see there are six things you are to 'taste and see'—prayer—the Bible—the feeling that you are forgiven—the conquering of your sin—doing some work for God, and heavenly pleasure—the upper spring. 'O taste and see!'

Now you are going away. Don't say 'I have heard a sermon and it is done,' but go and see and try for yourselves those six things. Everybody is old enough, and I am sure you will never regret it; but you will be happier. 'O taste and see'; and when you have 'tasted' yourself, oh make known the result to all around—far and near—your school-fellows, and friends, and all—as well as the heathen abroad. 'O taste and see.' 'O taste and see.'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

## AN INVITATION

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.—PSALM XXXIV. 11.

## NOTICE—

**I. The Teacher who Invites.**—Don't know who first said the words, but our Great Teacher is always saying them. *Here* now saying them to us (Matt. xviii. 20).

## Think—

1. How wise He is.

Made the world (Col. i. 16, 17).

Became a child—so knows all about children—just how they feel, etc.

Grew to be a man—so knows all about men.

2. How kind He is.

Think: I am coming to the Great Teacher—so wise—so kind—He wants to teach *me!* 'How does He teach?' Sometimes by the *hymns*. Sometimes by the *chapters from the Bible*. Sometimes by the *sermon*. Different ways.

[Just as in school—different books, black-board, etc.]

**II. The Scholars Invited.**—'Ye children.'

1. Actual children. Always glad to teach *them*.

2. All others. Cf. Matthew xviii. 3; John iii. 3.

Two things they must do—

1. *Come*.—Can't learn if they keep away from teacher. Can keep away from Jesus Christ's school just as from others.

2. *Hearken*.—'Nothing to pay.' Yes, you must pay *attention*.

**III. The Lesson.**—Now we have the children in school, and the teacher ready to teach them. What is the lesson to be about? The fear of the Lord; i.e., how to trust God—best of all lessons.

'Begin with the alphabet?' Well, *this is the alphabet*. Proverbs i. 7; ix. 10. But it is a great deal more besides. Cf. Proverbs xv. 33, 'The *instruction* of wisdom'; xiv. 27, a fountain of life. 'By it' (xxii. 4) 'are riches and honour and life.' Cf. text: 'No want to them that fear Him'. [Not have all our *wishes*, but shall have all our *wants* supplied.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 125.]

## FRETFULNESS

'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers.'—PSALM XXXVII. 1

I HOPE none of the children will forget to look out in the Bible the text of every sermon, and do it without help from others; for in this way you will soon learn to find any book, chapter, and verse in the Bible. At the first you will need to remember the text to-day: 'Fret not thyself'; for some of you will look in the wrong place for the text. If the text were in First John you might look in the Gospel of John and not in his First Epistle, and so not finding the text you might fret about it. Now, if you will find the thirty-seventh Psalm and read it, you will see that the words: 'Fret not thyself,' are several times repeated; and I am going to preach you a sermon on fretfulness or peevishness.



Perhaps you think that I do not know what fretfulness, peevishness, is; but I do know what it is. For I have felt it, and seen it, and heard it, and read about it, and had it. I can tell you just what it is. And if I were to go into some of your homes I should find it there, and know it from the first word it would speak. If any boy or girl, father or mother, in your home has it, it will reveal itself in a little while in some word or act, though he or she should try hard to hide it. Let me tell you what it is.

To be peevish is to be habitually or constantly fretful, to be easily vexed or fretted, to be cross, hard to please, ill-natured, testy, irritable, waspish, apt to mutter and complain, petulant, discontented, captious. I see by your faces that you know it, and that you recognise it as something you have taken to bed with you at night which awakened with you in the morning, and which you have nursed all the day long. You all know what fretfulness, peevishness is. But some of you do not like that old and true name peevishness, and so you call it nervousness, as though to change its name were to change its nature. But it is the same old, unhappy, annoying thing that we have described, call it by what name you will.

I wish you would turn it out-of-doors, and never let it come in again; for then how happy your homes would be! For no fretful, peevish, cross, ill-tempered boy or girl, man or woman, ever was happy or able to make others happy. The habit of being fretful never makes one feel well, or look well, or act well, or speak well. It makes the face cross, the words sharp, the acts hateful, the heart sour, the life petulant, the boy or girl, man or woman, so disagreeable that nobody likes them. We like those that have smiling faces, sweet words, kind actions, and a 'thank you' for everything. But no one while peevish ever has these. A wasp has a sharp sting that hurts, so has a peevish boy or girl, whose words are like stings and whose acts are like sharp pins. No wonder, then, that the text says, 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers'.

Do you say: 'I cannot help it. I feel cross, crabbed, out of sorts; and I speak and act as I feel?'

That is just what you ought not to do. If you give way to your feelings you make yourself more fretful, and torment others about you. There is nothing but evil in it, to you and to others. That is not the way to get rid of cross feelings; but I will tell you how to do it, and if you try hard to follow the way you will soon be rid of petulant feelings and peevish habits. This is the way: When you feel cross or fretful or angry, walk across the room three times without saying a word, and you will feel better; and if you will do this every time you are peevish it will soon cure you altogether. Try it.

I used to try it when at school. If I could not get my lessons as quickly as I desired I became nervous, peevish, vexed. It fretted me as it does you. It was foolish in me, as it is in you, to be fretful over so small a matter; and so I said: 'I will break myself of it, lest it become a fixed habit'. To

do so I would leave my book for a minute or two, walk across the room a few times, say nothing, and presently the feeling of petulance would pass away; I would feel better; then I would go back to my study and learn my lesson quickly. If you will do this when you feel cross or peevish, and want to say or do some hateful thing, you will soon cease to be fretful and become pleasant. If you, every time you feel petulant, will stop, say nothing, do nothing ill-natured, but walk across the floor a few times, you will find that a sweet spirit will drive out the bitter spirit, gentle words will come in place of the stinging words, and kind acts instead of petulant. You will soon learn not to fret yourself over any evil. This will cure any case of peevishness which may afflict you and others.

And why should you not try it? It will turn your pouting and crying and fretting and scolding into smiles and sweetness and love. It will turn many a child into an angel of light, many a home into a paradise of joy. Try it the very next time you feel peevish, and every time—for once will not do—and it will make you happy. But fretting does you no good; it makes you and all in the home unhappy; it does nothing but harm. Why not turn it out of your hearts and homes, and never let it in again? Why not be rid of it at once and for ever? 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers.' 'Fret not thyself.' God forbids all peevishness, fretfulness.—A. HASTINGS Ross, *Sermons for Children*, p. 279.

#### THE WAY TO BE GOOD

'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'—PSALM XXXVII. 3.

My text says, 'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' There are *two lands*.

What land is that where there is pleasure and no pain, where there is day and no night, and where flowers never fade? That *land* is heaven; the land where Jesus is—where Jesus reigns. The land that Jesus bought and prepares for His people. How are you to get there? 'Trust in the Lord, and do good.' Is there food there? There must be *something* there that keeps people *alive*, for nobody *dies* there. In this land we die, and are put into the grave; but nobody dies there. *Here* we get sick, but no one is sick *there*. *Here* we *hunger and thirst*, but nobody is hungry or thirsty *there*. *Here* we want clothes, but in that land nobody wants anything at all. Would you like to get to that land where the sun must shine so sweetly, and the people must look so happy? There is no pain there—no sickness, no sorrow, no death. There must be a great many beautiful things there. But can you *reach* that land, and dwell therein for ever? Yes, you can. But *how* can you reach it? Jesus is *the way* to it; Jesus is the door into it; and Jesus is the *life*. And you can get into the way, and get through the door, and get at the life by *trusting* in the Lord Jesus.

We like to be well-off in *this* land also. It is

a very good thing to get food and clothes, and to spend our lives pleasantly on earth. But can we do so? Yes! 'Trust in the Lord, and do good.' If we do, God will give us His blessing and we shall be fed. How good God is. All the good of heaven, and all the good of earth, too, comes from God, through Jesus. 'Can you praise the Lord?' said a man once to an Indian. 'I can,' said he; 'but my tongue is too short to praise Him as I would like.' He thought if he had a longer tongue he could praise Him better. Our voices are not loud enough, nor our tongues sweet enough, to praise Him as we ought.

Some of you, perhaps, remember reading about John Newton. When he was a very old man he said, 'I have forgotten almost everything I knew'. Though once a very wicked man, he was then, and had been for a long time, a good and godly man. 'Two things,' said he, 'I cannot forget: one is that I am a very great sinner, the other is that Jesus Christ is a very great Saviour.' Don't forget these two things. May God put them into your heads and hearts. You cannot get good unless from God, through Jesus, by the Spirit; and you cannot do good unless God helps you. There are many ways appointed for getting help from God—praying is one way. Did you ever hear of the little boy, six years old, who went with his mother when she was looking for a lodging. At length she agreed to take a room, for which she was to pay three shillings each week. But as they were going away the little boy began to cry. 'Oh! mother, mother,' said he, 'what made you take that room?' 'Why, my dear,' said she, 'that is a beautiful room. It is a great deal a better room than the one we had before.' 'Oh, mamma,' he said, 'it is not near so good; there is no closet for prayer in it.' There was a little hole off the other place in which he prayed, where he was all alone, and no ear heard him but that of God. And he cried because he had no place where he could retire and pour out his heart before God. Prayer is a sure way of getting help.

Did you ever hear of little Peter who was sent with a message by his father on a snowy evening? The snow was falling heavily; and as poor Peter was trying to get on he lost his way, and after wandering about for a good while in the snow he fell down into a deep ditch. Well, there he was, and ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock came; and until two o'clock in the morning poor little Peter was crying for help. He was only able to say *lost! lost! lost!* There was a gentleman living near who happened just then to open his window and he heard the voice. Being a kind-hearted, good-natured man he rang the bell, and called up his servant, and sent him out to search. At last the servant found the poor little fellow shivering and shaking, and almost dead with cold. He took him up, wiped off the snow and brought him to the good man's house, wrapped him up in a blanket, and afterwards got him a warm drink; then they put him into bed, and by and by he was so much recovered that he was able to tell

where he lived. In the morning they brought him home to his father, and very soon he was as well and as happy as ever. If he had not felt that he was lost, and if he had not cried out for help, and if his cry had not reached the ear of one that had kindness and compassion enough to seek and to save him, he would have died in the snow. Children, you, too, are lost; cry out that you are lost—cry up to heaven—cry mightily to God; He can save you; 'now is the accepted time';—'seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near'. Jesus will hear you; the windows of heaven are ever open; every prayer sent up from earth, through Jesus, goes through those windows, and Jesus comes and saves all who cry to Him for help—not one of them will be lost. 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble,' He says, 'I will deliver thee.'

I must tell you a story about a poor Indian. He came to a house and said to the owner, 'I am hungry and weak; will you give me a little bread?' 'I cannot,' said the man. 'Will you give me a little milk?' said he again. 'I cannot,' said the man. 'Will you give me a little water?' said he, then. 'Get you gone, you Indian dog; you are very troublesome,' said the man. The Indian looked at him and walked away. Some time after this man, while hunting, was passing through a wild country, and going up to a hut he asked an Indian how far he was from home. 'Too far,' said the Indian, 'to get there to-night; you would be devoured by the wolves.' The Indian asked him to come in; he gave him his own bed and the best food he had, and sat up all the night in his room to guard him. In the morning he went with him, and led him in safety through the forest to his own place and to his own people. 'Sir,' said he, then, 'did you ever see me before?' 'I think I did, but I do not know where.' 'I once knocked at your door,' said the Indian, 'I asked you for food, or even for a drink of water, but you said, "Get you gone, you Indian dog"'. There is your home—there are your people. *You were welcome to rest in my house; welcome to my fire and my food; but if ever a poor Indian knocks at your door again for food do not turn him away and call him an Indian dog.*' The Indian acted like a good man, and the Christian acted like a bad man. Children, while you fear God, and seek His Spirit—while you trust in Jesus, and love Him; while you read of Jesus, and sing of Jesus, remember that you should be kind to every one, and especially at home; ask God to *make you*, and then *try to be*, good sons and good daughters, good brothers and good sisters. I nearly forgot to tell you of a good brother, only six years old, who was playing with his little sister who was only four. A terrible mad dog, with his mouth open, rushed at them. The fearless boy immediately took up his jacket, put it round his hand, faced the dog, and thrust the hand into his mouth, while the little girl ran away. Some men coming up, cried out, 'Oh! you sad little rogue of a fellow, why did you not run away?' 'Because,' said he, 'my dear

sister would be torn by the dog if I did.' The brave and noble child kept his hand in the dog's mouth till the men came up and killed him. The right brothers will be fond of their sisters, and will be kind to them; they will try to guard them from mad dogs, and bad men, and everything that is bad. The good brothers and good sisters will 'trust in the Lord and do good' to each other and 'to all men'.—JOHN GREGG, *Sermons to Children*, p. 117.

### MARCHING ORDERS

'Trust in the Lord, and do good.'—PSALM XXXVII. 3.

HERE is a motto for you—something to keep always before you. The words are all one-syllable words, so the littles of you all can master them, but they are like little seeds that bear great fruits, for the whole Bible is packed up for us here.

*Trust*—that is the first thing, and *Do*—that is the next, and you must keep them in that order. Some people reverse them, and put *do* first and *trust* next—but these are the people who are always trying to make the stream flow uphill; they can't do it, and are only wasting their strength.

*Trust* first, then—*trust* first. For *trust* goes up to God, and we never make a right beginning about anything till we begin with Him. So *trust* Him, trust Him first, *trust* Him last, and *trust* Him all between.

And *Do*, that's the next thing: that has to do with father and mother, your brothers and sisters, and everybody in the wide, wide world. *Trust*—that is to get light and wisdom and strength from God to *do* what we should do as long as we are here on the earth.

Did you ever row a boat with only one oar? Then you remember how you went round and round, but never forward. Did you ever see a bird try to fly with one wing broken? Then you remember how the poor thing made scurry enough, but it never mounted upward. It is just the same with us when we try to go by only one or other of these words. If we *trust* but do not *do*, or if we *do* but do not *trust*, then we are like the boat with one oar or the bird with one wing—we shall be going round and round, and round and round, but getting no nearer to God, to happiness or to blessing. We must have both oars and both wings, and the name of the one is *trust*, and the name of the other *do*.

But, *trust* what, and do what? It is all told us here. 'Trust in the Lord.' He is Almighty—He never fails: He is everlasting—He never dies: they that trust in Him shall never have cause to be ashamed. 'And do—good.' That's simple—that's clear: it covers everything—from mending baby's doll, and helping Charlie with his lessons, up to helping boys and girls and men and women to know and love the Saviour—for in all that, and in all that comes between, you can be doing *good*. Stick to your rights, then. Let other people say as they will that they have a right to do this or a right to do that, never do you forget that there is only one

thing in all the world you have a right to do, and that is—a right to do good. Hold fast by that, and let no one ever take from you the right that God has given you.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 180.

### THE FOUNTAIN OF DELIGHT

'Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.'—PSALM XXXVII. 4.

THERE are many beautiful psalms in the Psalter, but I am disposed to think that this psalm is the most beautiful of them all.

I. Has the Psalmist, who knows so much, and has seen so much that nothing seems to surprise or disturb him, anything to say to *you*, any encouraging counsel and assurance? He has this to say: '*Rest in the Lord; Roll your burden on the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. He will open a door for you; He will clear the way before you, if only you are patient and look to Him, desiring to serve Him in all you do. The waiting may be as good for you as any work could be. It may prove to be a part, and the best part, of the discipline by which He is preparing you for your proper work in the world. And be sure of this: He will not suffer any capacity for service to go unused. Wait patiently, then, and you will work patiently by and by; and patience in well-doing is the most effective quality of all, the most certain of success. Wait; and work while you wait, and sweeten both the work and the waiting by trust in Him.'*

Again: Almost all of you, I suppose, take it for granted that you would be quite happy if you could only change your outward circumstances and shape them to your mind; if you could get as much money as you would like, for example, and live in the company you like, and get the sort of work you like; or perhaps even you feel that you could dispense with work altogether if only you could have everything else to your taste. You crave pleasure, variety of scene and action, and think you could be content if you had the world at your feet. *But could you?*

All through this Psalm the wise kind writer of it is asking you to consider that assumption. The contrast he draws between the good man and the bad man, with their respective ends, is intended to suggest to you such questions as these: 'If I lived in the best company in the world, and had a bad heart, could I be happy then? If I had all the money in the world, and all that money can bring, with a haunted conscience, could I be at peace then?' The truth he sets himself to teach you is that it is not any change in outward conditions which robs us of our peace; but our unrul'd affections, our excessive cravings, our ill-regulated desires. The fountain of peace is within us, not outside us. If a bad toothache, an aching nerve, would make the wealthiest and most prosperous of men miserable, how much more would a wounded and alarmed conscience, or a sullen, suspicious, and selfish heart? But the



poorest of men can afford to keep a good conscience and a kindly heart, i.e. he may possess all that is essential to peace.

II. You must not imagine, however, that the wise old man who speaks so gravely to you takes an austere and gloomy view of human life. To no man was life ever more bright and serene. Nor must you imagine that he frowns on your craving for pleasure, for delight; or that he bids you mortify the natural and eager desires of your hearts. On the contrary, he shows you where you may find the truest and most enduring delight, and promises that the inmost and deepest desires of your heart shall be satisfied. And I dare say that nothing in the whole Psalm seems so strange, so incredible to you as this promise, the promise of my text. Yet it is simply and obviously true, as I will try to show you. Only, if you would see it to be true, you must take the whole verse together, and not a part of it by itself. What the Psalmist really promises you is that if you delight yourselves in the Lord, the Lord will satisfy your utmost craving for delight; that if you desire *Him*, He will give you the desire of your heart.

The things that last are the soul and the relations of the soul to God. The things that satisfy are a soul at peace with God, a soul that can find its delight in Him; sympathy with His will; a love which springs to meet His love; and the assurance that nothing can ever separate us from His love. These are the true, the supreme, realities. All else will change or pass, but these never. Change and death have no power over them. They will be your light and joy here, and then your light and joy through the great hereafter.

Begin, then, to delight yourselves in the Lord, and begin at once, that He may at once begin to give you the desires of your heart.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 238.

### FRETFULNESS

'Fret not thyself, else shalt thou be tempted to do evil.'—  
PSALM XXXVII. 8.

WHAT does the word to *fret* mean? Why, it means to rub and rub something, till, by degrees, its outside surface becomes worn away. You read in the Psalms about a moth fretting a garment. I have seen a machine, in which a thread of silk had continually to run round a cylinder of glass a thousand times or more in a minute, and this for ten hours a day. At the end of some years you could just see a channel which this thread had worn in the glass, a tiny line. Think, then, how very, very small each of the grains must have been that the thread ground out, when it took so many years, with such hard rubbing every day, to make a line which should be seen at all.

Well, here we read of another kind of fretting or wearing away, the fretting or wearing away ourselves. And the person who gives way to that we call, as you know, a fretful person. A very common sin it is, one of the commonest that I know, especially among children; and here we have a Psalm, as we also have

a chapter in the Book of Proverbs, to warn us against it. Now, what do we mean by fretting? It is not the same thing as anger; it is not the same as discontent; it is not at all the same as hatred; it is not the same as impatience; but it has something to do with all of these. It is the being always apt to make a little murmuring against the state of life, or the circumstances for the time being, that God places us in. There is nothing great in it; a man may be in a great passion, or indulge great hatred, but we hardly talk about fretting greatly. No; it is a little wearing complaint; always at it, never leaving off; perpetually rubbing, as the silk did the glass. We have several instances of it in the Bible. Jonah was fretful about the gourd that came up in a night and perished in a night. Jacob was fretful when he said, 'All these things are against me'. The children in the market-place were fretful, when, as our Lord tells, if piped to they would not dance, and if mourned to they would not lament.

Now this is a sin which people will give way to all their lives, and hardly seem to consider a real sin at all. You all know how disagreeable a fretful person or a fretful child is. It does not matter that it is a little discontent, a little murmuring, a little complaining; it is the continual dropping that wears away the stone, not the bigness of this or that drop.

And now see. A fretful person does not dare to say outright what he feels. If he did it would be this: 'God is dealing very hardly and unjustly with me. He always does deal very hardly and unjustly with me. I should be so glad to get such and such a thing which so and so have, and it is never given to me, though it is to them plentifully. Or, I should be so thankful to get rid of this or that pain, but I am sure to have it.' A good example of a fretful speech is that of the elder brother of the Prodigal Son: 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf'.

And see why this is such a sin. In the first place, because it is telling God not only that He does visit us after our iniquities, but that He is continually sending on us much more than we deserve. So no one that is humble can ever be fretful. Ah! if we only would think what that means which Jeremiah says, 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not'—what? that we are not punished? that we are not cast out as unprofitable servants? that we are not beaten with many stripes? much more than all this: 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed'. With so much that is done for us, and such a return that we make; with so much help, and yet we are not helped; with so much encouragement, and yet we will not be encouraged! Therefore fretfulness can only come from pride. And that is not all: there is a kind of deceit in it, too. We do not dare to say openly, 'God is dealing unjustly and

cruelly with me'; so instead of complaining of Him, we complain of those about us. But He sees that it is but a deceitful and lying way of showing our ill-temper to Him, by professing to feel it with some one else. What did Jacob say when he was angry and annoyed about the loss of his children? 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away.' Ye will! It was not his sons' doings: it was God's ordering: and it was God with whom, in very deed, Jacob was angry. See how Moses spoke about this, when the children of Israel were speaking against Aaron and himself: 'What are we that ye murmur against us? your murmurings are not against us, but against God'. And so it is over and over again now. You are fretful among your companions, you say peevish discontented things to them; and you in real truth are speaking against God. You try to hide it from them; you even try to hide it from yourselves, but from God you cannot hide it. Remember that text: 'The eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men'. Your poor miserable peevish complainings are against Him, not the less because you will not own it; nay, the sin is all the greater, because, besides murmuring against Him, you are trying to deceive Him too.

And see how remarkably the text goes on: 'Fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil'. And that shows us how Satan is always ready, always waiting, always on the watch, to see when we may best be tempted, and to tempt us at that particular moment. There is good need that God's priests should say to you what the watchman in Israel cried to them that inquired of him. It is a very singular text; therefore attend to it: there is no text which teaches more: 'For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels: and he hearkened diligently with much heed': and he cried—what do you suppose? One should imagine perhaps that he cried of what he had seen; but no: 'and he cried, *A lion*'; and then he went on to tell what he had seen. Why did he cry *a lion* first? We hear nothing about a lion in the text before. Because whatever happens to us, or whatever we have to do, we are always close to that lion who 'walketh about seeking whom he may devour,' even Satan: and therefore of him the watchman gave warning, in the first place. Notice what we read in the Proverbs: 'The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way: I shall be slain in the streets'. Now he is not slothful or to blame for the first part of what he said. A lion is in the way, that is true enough. A lion is in all our ways, as long as we are in this world; and that is why Isaiah, writing of heaven, says, 'No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there'. But he is slothful for saying, 'I shall be slain in the streets,' instead of believing that God is able to deliver us, if we trust in Him, from the teeth of this spiritual lion,

as he delivered David from the 'paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear'.

Well, then, at all times Satan is ready to attack us: but sometimes we almost invite him to assault us. Sometimes we put ourselves into such a condition that, if he does attack us, we shall hardly be able to resist him. You know when any infectious disease is about, like the cholera, or the typhus fever, we are all exposed to the danger of it. But there are certain things which if we do,—there is certain food which if we eat,—we shall be far more likely to take it. And therefore the physicians put forth notices what people ought not to do, ought not to eat, if they are to avoid the disease. Just so it is with our souls; and so here, God, who is the Great Physician, tells us what we are not to do, if we wish to be preserved from the attack of Satan: 'Fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil'. Now one of the first stories in the Bible shows us how one who has thus been fretting himself, is just in the way to fall into the most frightful temptations. And what story do I mean? Why that of Cain and Abel. Cain fretted himself, even in God's very presence, because Abel's offering was accepted, and his was not; and we know what the end of this story was. And the children of Israel fretted themselves that the land of Canaan was too strong ever to be conquered by them; that the giants and walled cities and the seven nations would keep them for ever out of the country that flows with milk and honey. What sentence did they provoke God to pronounce upon them at last? Listen; and then see what their fretting ended in: 'Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their forefathers, neither shall any of them that provoked Me see it'.

And see now, 'Fret not thyself, else shalt thou be moved to do evil'. We begin the sin for ourselves; Satan works it out to the full. Just as it is in the opposite way. We try after some good thing, we do our best, we set ourselves to the work, and then our dear Lord works with us and helps us. Thus in an evil thing; we begin it, often, for ourselves, and Satan takes it out of our hands and finishes it for us. Yes, indeed, and we should over and over again be apt to cry out, as Hazeel did, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' if we could see the evil into which, starting from some very little sin, or what seems to us very little, we should be led.

And now notice one thing more. What kind of fretting is that which David here speaks of? Why, when there is really cause for us to be moved, then it really is a heavy trial. When we see the wicked seeming to prosper, and we ourselves, though we may be trying to serve God, vexed and persecuted and afflicted, even then 'fret not thyself'. Nevertheless, this was so hard a trial to Asaph, him that wrote so many of the Psalms, that he says, 'Then thought I to understand these things, but it was too hard for me, yea, and I had almost said even as they,' that is, as the wicked, 'but, lo: then should I have condemned the generation of Thy children'. Now you

do not know as yet what this means, but probably you will know it some day; and then you will find it a very hard trouble to bear; a trouble that you only can bear by looking as St. Paul says, 'Not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen'; by looking past the present to the future; by casting your eyes past the *middle* to the *end*. And this is the verse that, above all others, I would then have you remember: 'Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God'.

I took this text because it came in the Psalm which you have just been saying, not for any other reason. But remember this, health has some especial temptations, and sickness some; and one of those of sickness is to be fretful. Any of you who do not feel strong, who are used to pain, who are accustomed to feel ill, must be all the more on your guard against this; against feeling discontented and peevish, and fretful about little things. And remember that country in which there can be no ill-temper; remember Him who 'endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds,' 'who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously'. That is the country of which the inhabitants will no more say, 'I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*.

#### AN INHERITANCE

'Such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth.'—PSALM XXXVII. 22.

THERE is one thing which perhaps boys in the country are more likely to do than boys in a town. They like to look away from the village in which they were born and the cottage in which they live and think of the days to come and of the things they shall then possess. They imagine themselves making a great lot of money, and living in great houses, and having servants to serve them, and carriages and a great name among men.

It is such a pleasant thing for boys, before they learn how little power they have to shape the future, to fancy it filled with riches and grandeur which shall belong to them.

Early in the last century a poor boy was attending a foundation school in an English village. He was a dreamer of dreams like these. Often in the play-hours of the school he would go off alone to the river-side and seat himself under a spreading tree and dream his dreams. One day, while his schoolfellows were busy elsewhere with their games, he had a very great dream. Poor though he was, he was the heir of a family that had once been rich. The sorrowful thought took hold of him that his forefathers had let

their riches go, and he sat there under his favourite tree turning the sad fact over and over in his mind: 'This tree under which I sit,' he said to himself, 'belonged once to my forefathers. So did the river that is flowing past. So did the fields on the other side as far as the eye can reach, and the fields on this side, and the village and the village church, and the great mansions in the park, and all the villages and farms about; and now there is not one foot of it all in the possession of their children.'

It was a very boyish thought which came into his mind after that sad one. But it really came into his mind, and would not go away. He said to himself: 'If I live, I shall try to win back what my forefathers have let go. And this river flowing at my feet, and this tree under which I have so often sat, and all the fields and houses that once belonged to my family shall belong to them again.'

And although it seemed at the time a mere dream and no more than a thought in a dream, all came to pass as he dreamed. He lived to carry out his thought.

Some friends of the old family took an interest in the boy, and got him sent out to India as a young clerk. He was well-behaved and attentive to his duties, and he was clever. Everything put under his care went well. He became a good soldier, a good leader of armies. He fought great battles and won them. He rose to be Governor of India, and became very rich. And when long years were past the people in England knew of him as the famous Warren Hastings, of whom the books of English and Indian history have wonderful stories to tell. And then, when he was rich and famous, he returned to England, and bit by bit he bought back the lands which his forefathers had lost, and he became lord of the tree under which he dreamed his dreams, and of the river which flowed at his feet, and of all the fields and villages around.

Now I know, for I remember my own boyhood, that this is a story to set boys a-dreaming. Could not you go to some rich land far away, and come back with gold and silver, and buy fields and houses, and be lords in the land? Yes. Some of you may really do that very thing. But it can only be some of you—only a very few of you. There are very few boys in the world who are heirs to old families. It is only a boy here and there, even among such, to whom friends of his dead forefathers will come with help. And among boys helped by such friends, not one in a thousand will be able to do the things which Hastings did. It is not easy to buy back a lost inheritance, or win a new one for oneself.

But do not think, because I say this, that you are shut out from such possessions. Every boy before me is the heir of inheritances grander than any that can be bought with gold. Listen, and I will tell you of one which the good Lord prepared for you before you were born.

You are the heirs of the greatest country upon the earth. Your native land belongs to you and to the boys and girls of this time. It belonged to your



forefathers; it belongs to you now. Its hills, its valleys, its rivers and shores, they are yours. So is the story of its past years, and the memory of the great men and women who have lived in it and made it what it is. The churches and schools throughout the country, the judgment halls and palaces, the squares and parks in cities, the cities themselves, and all the labour that stirs in them, and all the crowds that live in them, they are yours. If you went to live in another country, these things would follow you and visit you in your dreams, and you would say, 'They are pictures from my native land'. And you would think with pride of the grandeur of your country, and of the glory which God has given it among the countries of the earth. 'Mine is a country,' you would say to strangers, 'the word of whose merchants is as good as gold; the speech of whose people is spreading over all the earth; the flag of whose ships is known on every sea.' And you would rejoice in it and thank God for it, and tell how it stands for liberty and justice and help to the oppressed wherever it is known. Yes. You are heirs in your native land. Its great books, its poems, its sweet singers, its builders, its painters, its mighty captains, its brave travellers, they are yours. You can say—you have said—'These are the travellers and the captains and the sweet singers of my native land. They belong to me.' No matter though you should be poor and own neither castle nor park in all the land. The splendour of sunrise and sunset upon its mountains is yours. And if a great deed should be done by any of its sons, you have a share in the glory of that deed.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 205.

### TALKATIVENESS

'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue.'—PSALM XXXIX. 1 (Prayer Book Version).

It is not by any means easy to keep a watch over our tongue and prevent it from making mischief and leading us into sin, and, in fact, many grown-up people have never learnt the lesson, perhaps because they never consider how important it is; but let me tell you what one good man thought about the task.

There was once a plain ignorant man called Pambo, who was about to enter a monastery as a monk, and so he went to a very learned and pious man and asked him to give him instructions for his new course of life. The old man opened the Book of Psalms and read this verse, 'I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue'.

'That is enough,' said Pambo, 'let me go home and practise that.'

Some months after the teacher asked him whether he wouldn't like some further instruction.

'No,' said Pambo, 'I haven't mastered that yet.'

And forty-nine years after that, the good man said he was just beginning to learn to obey the commandment.

We must take heed to our ways lest we talk when we ought to be silent. Sometimes we hear things about others, something they have said or done, and

we go and repeat them—telling tales, you children call it. We say, 'Oh! do you know what John Smith did? or Mary Brown said? Well, then, I will tell you,' and then this unruly member of ours begins the story.

Let us learn never to say anything to others which may tend to stir up strife, or lead to unpleasantness—far better to be silent than use idle words, for remember, we shall be called to answer some day for the use we have made of the gift of speech. We may forget to take heed to our ways, but God doesn't forget our idle words, our foolish, unprofitable, wicked sayings, and for all of these we shall have to give an account at last. So then let us say in the words of the text, 'I will take heed to my ways, lest I offend in my tongue'.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 127.

### THE NEW SONG

(A New Year's Sermon)

'He hath put a new song in my mouth.'—PSALM XL. 3.

On this New Year's Day I am going to speak to you about a new thing. I know you like new things—new dresses, new pictures, new books, new years, new everything; do you not? Old people, perhaps, like old things better, although they like some new things too, especially sweet young faces and young hearts. To-day, when you are thinking of the new year that is coming up out of the future with its happy hours and new pleasures, they are thinking very likely of old years long past, of old friends long dead—perhaps of old sins. But it is of new things you always think.

And I am sure you like singing too. Where is there a child that does not like singing? Some of you can sing almost as sweetly as the birds in the hedges; and you are at it all day long. Even if you cannot sing yourselves, you like to hear others sing; and many a time you ask your mother, or your sister, or a friend to sing to you.

Well, it is about a new song I am to speak to you to-day.

It is a very wonderful song. It is the sweetest ever heard in the world. You may have seen crowds of people flocking to a concert-room to hear a famous singer. But when anyone is singing this new song, though it be but a little child, there are angels listening, and even God Himself bends down His ear to hear. It is easy to sing it: it does not, like French or Italian songs, require learning to read the words; it does not require musical skill to learn the notes; it does not require a fine voice, for even the aged and the dying can sing it. Yet it is so peculiar, that a singer with the finest voice in the world, and the most perfect musical training, may not be able to render it.

I have three things to tell you about the new song:—

1. It is the Song of the New Heart.—All good singing comes from the heart. I have often heard a

singer with a really good song to sing, whose words were written by a true poet, and whose music was made by a skilful composer; and the singer had a good voice, a true ear, a thorough musical education, and a pleasing manner. But the song was a failure, because it did not come from the heart. You have seen the robin in the morning piping with might and main on the fence, his sides throbbing with excitement. You have heard the lark on a summer day far up in the bosom of a white cloud. Why does their song thrill you through and through? It is because it comes straight from the heart.

The new song comes from the new heart. Some of us have old and some have new hearts. The old heart is hard and stony, godless and impure. The new heart is soft, pure, and Christ-like. Christ takes away the old hard heart, and gives us the new one, when we ask Him. Have you ever felt the hard old heart within you, and cried to Him to take it away and give you the new heart? If not, you cannot yet sing the new song; for only those who have the new heart can sing it.

It is not necessary that the song should be literally new. It may be thousands of years old, like the Psalm from which the text is taken; yet if it is sung by the new heart, then it is filled with new feeling, and made a new song. Oh I like to read such a Psalm as the fortieth, or the hundred and sixteenth, and think how for thousands of years those who have got the new heart have taken it, and poured their new, warm feelings into it, and made it as much their own and as new as if they had composed it! Could you sing that verse of the fortieth Psalm:—

He took me from a fearful pit,  
And from the miry clay,  
And on a rock He set my feet,  
Establishing my way—

or the hundred and sixteenth Psalm—

I love the Lord, because my voice  
And prayers He did hear—

or M'Cheyne's hymn—

I once was a stranger to grace and to God—

or Toplady's—

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee—

with your whole heart? I do not mean because you like the music, or think the words beautiful, or are fond of singing; but because the song is the true expression of your own feeling. Can you truly, and with all your heart, sing, 'I love the Lord'? You cannot, if you have not the new heart. But if you should get it, all those beautiful Psalms and hymns you have learned and liked would become real to you, for they would be the natural expression of your own feeling; they would become ten times more dear to you; and your heart would rush into their meaning, and your voice soar into their music, like a bird darting aloft, singing as it soars, into the air and the sunshine of a bright morning. They would all become new songs to you.

What is it which makes the new heart a singing heart? It is love. The new heart is a loving heart. It loves the Father, it loves Christ, it loves men. It is like Christ's own heart, which was full of love to the brim. Now nothing makes the heart sing like love. The 'Song of Songs' is all about love. And if you look through the songs of the poets, you will find that the half of them are about love; and all the poets say that it was love which made them sing. So if you look through your hymns, you will find that the sweetest and the best of them are about love.

The new heart sings because it is filled full of love to Christ, and lost in wonder at the thought of His love to it.

**II. It is the Song of the New Way.**—My children, you and I are travellers to Eternity. Now, just as there are two kinds of hearts—the old heart and the new—so there are two ways which different persons are walking through this world to Eternity. The one is the old and broad way, the other the new and narrow way. Those who have the old heart are going the old way, and those who have the new heart the new way. The old way leads down to eternal death; the new way leads up to God.

The new way was made by Christ. Men did not know which way to go. Most of them willingly went the broad way to death. Yet there were a few who wished to get to God. But there was no way. Once there had been one, but it had been destroyed and lost. Jesus came down from heaven to make a way. It cost Him infinite labour—it cost Him His life. But He made it. It is long, uphill, and narrow; but it is a royal road, and leads straight to God.

Those who travel along this road sing as they go. Well they may; for every step is taking them farther away from sin and destruction and nearer to God, and they are treading in the footsteps of Jesus.

You have heard, I dare say, that this road is rough and difficult. So it often is. There are in it the Hill Difficulty, and the Valley of Humiliation, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. If you become true Christians, you may have to suffer for it. The best men and women who have ever lived have been hated, persecuted, and killed.

But all that does not prevent the new way from being cheered from end to end with song. Those who tread it can sing even in the hardest and darkest places.

Did you ever hear a nightingale? At least you have heard of it—of the floods of music it pours from its throat, ranging from the guttural, croodling twitters and murmurs of its low notes up to the glorious triumph of its most splendid joy. I remember once living in a town where one could hear them every day; and near the town there was an island in the river called the Nightingale Island, covered with pines and oaks, which was so full of them that, sailing round it on the quiet bosom of the water in the shimmer of the moonlight, one might enjoy the most enchanting concert from their sweet voices.

But the peculiarity of the nightingale is that it sings little by day. It is in the night it sings. When all the other songsters of the grove are silent, then it pours its melody on the darkness.

So those who have the new heart can sing in the darkest parts of the new way. You remember Christian sang in the Valley of Humiliation, though he met there with Apollyon; and the timorous maiden Much-afraid went across the River of Death with a song that enchanted every one that heard it.

III. It is the Song of the New Home.—The new way leads to the new home. The heart of man is never at rest till it rests in a home. And the new heart cannot rest except in the new home. Christ is there, and it rests not till it reposes on His bosom.

Home is the place of songs. And the new home is full of music and singing. It is because it is full of loving and joyful hearts.

But the new song will be sung there only by those who have sung it here—by those whose hearts have been made new on earth, and who have travelled to heaven by the new way.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 9.

#### BORED EARS

‘Mine ears hast Thou opened.’—PSALM XL, 6.

If you look in the margin of your Bible you will see that this means—‘Mine ears hast Thou digged’. Let me explain this.

The Israelites had slaves, but they could not keep them for slaves always. When Jubilee year came round all the slaves had to be set free.

But sometimes a slave did not want to go away from his master. His master had been kind to him and good, and he didn't wish to leave him. In that case his master bored a hole in the ear of his slave, and from that moment the servant was no longer a slave—he was like one of his master's own sons; for he had the chance to go if he liked, but he preferred to stay through love, and love never was in slavery, and never can be, for love is always free-born. Free to go, but preferring to stay—that is what the hole in the ear meant.

And some wise people tell us that was why young maidens and wives came first to wear earrings; they were proud, and rightly proud, of showing that while they were free they were also bound—but bound by love and not by fear—to somebody. But you needn't pay any heed to that now.

The thing to notice is—the bored, the opened ear, meant that a man remained with his master because he loved him. Ah, that is the right spirit we must get for Jesus. Some really don't like Jesus, and yet they keep in His house, and they do many things He bids them, but if they could only escape and be wicked they would. Only they are afraid, for they know they must meet Jesus when they die. They are held by fear, and not by love; they are slaves—slaves in their hearts and in their minds. It is not till we come to serve Jesus out of love that we are

really free—free to go if we like, but preferring to stay for love. That is the spirit which is pleasing to God.

I had a little linnet once. It had tumbled out of some nest before it had a feather, and I had to be mother and father to it, and a fine little child he became to me. I fed him and took care of him, and he grew strong and pert as any. I had kept him a little prisoner in a cage, and he seemed always wanting to escape, so one day I thought—if he wants his liberty he may have it. I opened the cage door, and sat down on a chair and watched. It wasn't long before lintie made his cage door like a penny—for he had a head on one side and a tail on the other! How he looked at me, and looked round the room—you would have thought he was going to buy the premises, he was so critical! Then he took a little flight out—but flew back to the door in an instant. After this he grew bolder—got on top of his cage—and then flew round the room—down on the floor—round about my feet—but at the least fright he was back to the cage door again.

So I did not fasten that door on him any more. He got going or coming just as he pleased, and a fine little companion he became. He woke me in the morning by pecking at my hair, and he always had the first plunge into the basin. He used to peck at my pen when I was writing, and in fact, if I was there, he felt he should be there too. Only once more did I make a trial of his love. I took him out to the garden (I lived in the country then) and tossed him into the air among the trees, and he seemed to enjoy it finely, for he flew about and whistled, and put on airs. But when I turned to go indoors and leave him, he flew on my shoulder and burrowed round my neck, and so came in along with me. He was free to go, but lintie loved to stay, and loving and fond we were of one another until he died.

Is that why you listen when we speak about Jesus?—why you want to do what He bids? Is it because you love Him? because you wouldn't go away from Him if you could? Ah! that is the right spirit of His own true boy or His own true girl.

Then just remember—when you want to be with Him because you love Him you must have your ears open for Him. For Him—not for wicked words, nor for filthy stories, nor to listen when others would tempt you to do what is wrong. Sometimes in the playground there is a boy or a girl who says things you would be ashamed to tell mother at home. Then be ashamed to listen to them—turn away—turn away boldly and give this as your reason, ‘I love the Lord Jesus’. It was through the ear sin first came into the heart—when Satan whispered to Eve—and it is through the ear still the Tempter does his most wicked works. Keep your ears open only for what you would like Jesus to hear along with you.

But the opened ear also meant the obedient heart. Though the man was no longer a slave after his ear was bored, yet he had to obey orders—only he now



obeyed from love, and not from fear. And so you find this man the Psalm speaks about no sooner says, 'Mine ears hast Thou opened' than he also says, 'Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O my God'. The opened ear, you mark, was the sign of an obedient heart—as soon as his Master called he said, 'Lo, I come'. And so, when the Lord called Samuel, and Samuel wanted the Lord to understand that he was ready to obey, what he said was, 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth'. For him to hear was for him to obey.

Let it be the same with you. It wasn't the mark on the ear that gave the man the obedient heart, but because he had the obedient heart he wanted to have the open ear for whatever his master might tell him. And just so, it isn't merely listening to what Jesus tells us that pleases Him—it is listening and obeying. Many listen who don't obey—they have got love's mark, but not love's heart. Have you both? Listen lovingly for the Lord's words, and then lovingly seek to do them. Keep the way for His words always open between the ear and the heart.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pulpit*, p. 232.

#### THE BLESSEDNESS OF CONSIDERING THE POOR

'Blessed is he that considereth the poor.'—PSALM XLI. 1.

I WISH to speak of *three* reasons why it is a blessed thing to consider the poor.

The *first* reason is, **That it is like God.**—David says, 'Thou, O God, hast of Thy goodness prepared for the poor'. What wonderful preparation God makes for the poor! He not only provides for poor people, but poor animals too. It says in the Bible that 'the lions, roaring after their prey, seek their meat from God. He feedeth the young ravens when they cry.' All the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, are fed by God. How large a family this is! What different kinds of food they require! But God '*considers*' what they want, and gets it ready for them.

Some travellers lately went up a high mountain, fourteen thousand feet high. It is covered with ice and snow at the top all the year. No men could live up there. Even if they could stand the cold, they could find nothing to eat. But the travellers found some insects living there. God had made the mountain-top a home for them, and He had provided them with food just such as they needed.

In preparing to lay the wires for the magnetic telegraph to America some time since, it became necessary to find out how deep the water in the ocean was up towards the coast of Greenland. The men who were sounding for this purpose measured in one place where the water was seven thousand feet deep. And yet, even at that great depth they found live shell-fish at the bottom of the ocean. And God had not forgotten them. Away down, under all that depth of water, God has prepared them the food they need. God is always considering the poor. When He

makes the sun to shine, and the rains to descend, and the dews to distil, He does it, among other reasons, that the grain may grow, and the fruits of the earth may ripen, on which both the rich and poor are dependent for their food.

But God does more than all this. He considers the poor in a special way, and when He knows that those who love Him are suffering for the want of anything, He takes particular pains to send them what they need.

The *second* reason why we should consider the poor, is **Because we can Make them Happy in this Way.**—And this is what God sent us into the world for. God is doing all He can to make people happy. The Bible tells us that God sent His Son Jesus into the world on purpose to bless us, and to make us happy. And when we learn to love Jesus, and try to do those things that please Him, we shall not only be happy ourselves, but we shall be trying to make others happy. And one of the best ways of doing this is by 'considering the poor'; by trying to be kind to them, and to help them in their troubles and sorrows.

One day a poor man was going into the counting-house of a very wealthy merchant. As he went in he saw great sums of gold and silver which the clerks were busy in counting. It was in the midst of winter. The poor man thought of his desolate home, and the wants of his family, and, almost without thinking, he said to himself, 'Ah! how happy a very little of that money would make me!' The merchant overheard him. 'What is that you say, my friend?' he asked. The poor man was confused, and begged to be excused, as he did not intend to say anything. But the kind-hearted merchant would not excuse him, and so the man was obliged to repeat what he had said. 'Well, my good fellow,' said the merchant, 'and how much would it take to make you happy?' 'Oh, I don't know, sir,' said he, 'but the weather is very cold, and I have no fire; my wife and children are poorly clad, for I have been sick. But we don't want much. I think, sir, five pounds would get us all we need.' 'John,' said the merchant to his clerk, 'count this man out five pounds.'

The man's heart was made glad, and he went back to a home that was made glad too.

At the close of the day, the clerk asked the merchant how he should enter in his books the money given to the poor man. He answered, 'Say, "For making a man happy, five pounds"'.  
Perhaps that merchant never spent money better in his life.

The *third* reason why we should do this, is **Because we do Good to Ourselves by it.**—We may be very sure of this, because God has promised it. See what He says in the verse in which our text is found: 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble'. And then there is another promise in the Bible which reads thus: 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will He pay him again'. If we lend our money to anyone else, we

never can be sure of getting it back again ; but if we lend it to the Lord, we may be perfectly sure that He will pay us back, and always with good interest.

There is a story told of a good bishop who was very charitable. Once, when he was travelling, some poor people met him, and begged for help. The bishop asked his servant how much money they had with them. He said, 'Three crowns, sir'. 'Give them to these poor people,' said the bishop. But the servant thought his master was too liberal. So he gave two crowns to the poor people, and kept one to pay for their lodging at night.

Not long after a certain rich nobleman met the bishop. Knowing how charitable he was to the poor, he ordered his steward to pay two hundred crowns to the bishop's servant for his master's use. The servant was overjoyed, and hastened to tell his master what had happened. 'Ah,' said the bishop, 'if you had only had more faith in God, and given the three crowns to the poor, as I told you, you would have had three hundred crowns now, instead of two hundred.'

Thus you see how the bishop was blessed for considering the poor. 'That which he paid away, God paid him again.' *He did good to himself* by considering the poor.

A gentleman, near London, once went to visit a poor woman who was sick. When he entered the room he saw a little girl kneeling at her bedside, who immediately went out. He asked the sick woman who the child was. 'Oh, sir,' said she, 'it is a little angel who often comes in to read the Bible to me, to my great comfort, and who has just left sixpence with me.' On inquiring further, he found that the little girl was poor herself, and that the sixpence left with the sick woman had been given to the child for a reward. She began to practise on the text with only sixpence. How very few there are but what have that much !

But considering the poor doesn't always mean giving them money. It often means, speaking kindly to them, and showing that we feel sympathy for them.

One day a young lady had gone out to take a walk. She forgot to take her purse with her, and had no money in her pocket. Presently she met a little girl with a basket on her arm. 'Please, miss, will you buy something from my basket?' said the little girl, showing a variety of book-marks, watch-cases, needle-books, etc.

'I'm sorry I can't buy anything to-day,' said the young lady, 'I haven't got any money with me. Your things look very pretty.' She stopped a moment, and spoke a few kind words to the little pedlar. And then, as she passed on, she said again, 'I'm very sorry I can't buy anything from you to-day.'

'Oh, miss,' said the little girl, 'you've done me just as much good as if you had. Most persons that I meet say, "Get away with you". But you have spoken kindly to me, and I feel much better.'

That was considering the poor. How little it

costs to do that ! Let us learn to speak kindly and gently to the poor and the suffering. If we have nothing else to give, let us at least give them our sympathy.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 34.

### THE HART

'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.'—PSALM XLII. 1, 2.

THE hart is the old English name for the male of the red deer or the stag, while the hind is the name for the female. The female is probably meant here ; for, though the noun is masculine, the verb is feminine. All nations have found their symbols of the soul in the female rather than in the male, and we feel that the choice is just. For instance, in the famed picture, 'Lux in Tenebris,' the soul is represented as a young, shrinking girl. There are many kinds of deer in the East, and many names for them ; the antelope, the ibex, the gazelle, the roe. As all the Bible-writers like to wed their lessons to the commonest objects, David probably has in his eye the common gazelle of Syria. It was a great pleasure to our party to surprise a small herd of gazelles. The gazelle is one of the loveliest, cleanest, gentlest, and most sprightly of animals. It constantly 'snuffs up the wind,' and travels against the wind ; and its scent is so very keen that it rarely fails to detect a lurking foe. Its swiftness is proverbial, and it is famed for its feats of leaping. It can outstrip the fleetest horse or greyhound in the chase. It was often used as an emblem of womanly beauty, and its name was a favourite name for women. Mr. Kinglake, in his *Eothen*, calls it 'a darling,' 'a beauty'. Doreas and Tabitha both mean gazelle. Like robin redbreast, among birds, the gazelle, more than any other animal, awakens in man an interest of peculiar tenderness—all the more that it is easily tamed, and still is often kept as a pet. Thus the eastern has a sort of half-human feeling towards this little creature, and a dim sense of respect and comradeship. You can thus understand why it is a great pet with the poets. Byron, Moore, and Wordsworth all praise the surpassing beauty of 'the dear gazelle'. Solomon does the same when he says, 'My beloved is like a roe or a young hart'. In his 'White Doe of Rylstone,' Wordsworth regards it, or the order to which it belongs, as in some mysterious sense nearer man than other animals are. He describes:—

A doe most beautiful, clear white,  
A radiant creature, silver bright.

And of the dead lady Aälza, he says:—

To the grief of her soul that doth come and go,  
In the beautiful form of this innocent doe.

David's hart is a great drinker, and most impatient of thirst. When summer's drought has dried up the streams, the life of the hart becomes one desire. It would then almost go through fire to get water. The Arabs lie in wait for the thirsty gazelles at their watering-places, and shoot them. And it searches for water till it finds it, or dies on the way. Its scent

for water is keener than its sight, and keener even than its scent for its lurking foes. There are wells among the ridges of the desert known only to the gazelles, and for which the Arabs search in vain. When thirsty, the hart pants, or, as the word means, brays after the water brooks. It then makes a strange, piercing sound: its whole heart and flesh cry out for water. In that braying heart David traces the semblance of his own soul longing for the living God. He also has the greatest wants and the keenest desires: he too must go out of himself for that of which he has no stock or store within. To a child of the desert, how beautiful the image, how affecting the sense in these words, 'As the hart brayeth after the water brooks, so brayeth my soul after Thee, O God'.

Earth's pleasures, like the water brooks in summer, don't last. After the great earthquake the other year in the Riviera, a dead boy's hand was seen above the ruins, and upon it was perched the bird he used to feed. Every human heart some day becomes like that bird; for the human hand that befriended it, once living and bounteous, is found dead, and cold, and empty. If you believe this one truth, then there will not be stuff enough left in you for the making of a child of earth: you shall be spoiled for that for ever.

I shall now give you two illustrations from biography. De Quincey writes the life of his friend, Lady Carbery. She was counted one of the most fortunate girls in Britain. A merchant's daughter, she became a Countess at the age of twenty-six. She seemed to have everything heart could wish. For instance, thirty-five horses stood at her service in her husband's stables. 'In no case,' says her biographer, 'was it more literally realised, as daily almost I witnessed, that

All Paradise  
Could, by the simple opening of a door,  
Let itself in upon her.'

Yet she fell early into a sort of disgust with her own advantages, because they had promised much and performed next to nothing in satisfying the yearnings of her heart. At the age of twenty-seven she had come to a most bitter sense of the hollowness and *treachery* of the portion earth was offering to her, and she sought refuge in an earnest Christian life.

Tauler, a famous preacher at Strassburg, was tortured with an inner unrest and thirst. One day he was sadly walking along the Rhine, and praying to God for light. He met an aged blind beggar. 'God give thee a good day,' Tauler said. 'I thank thee; but *all* my days are good, and none ill,' was the reply. 'God give thee happy life,' the preacher spake again. 'I never am unhappy,' the old man replied. Tauler asked the beggar to tell him the secret of his happy life, and he was told that it was a childlike trust in God. Tauler then got the light for which he had been praying. Returning to the city at noon, he saw far down the street a mighty shadow made by the tower of the cathedral.

'Behold!' he said,  
'The stranger's faith made plain before mine eyes,  
As yonder tower outstretches to the earth  
The dark triangle of its shade alone  
When the clear day is shining on its top,  
So, darkness in the pathway of man's life  
Is but the shadow of God's providence,  
By the great sun of wisdom cast thereon;  
And what is dark below is light in heaven.'

This great lesson was well understood by that dumb schoolboy, who, when thoughtlessly asked by a visitor why God had made him dumb, took the chalk and wrote on the blackboard, 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight'.

David's longing for God is very keen. Travellers tell us that one of the most touching sights in the world is to see a herd of gazelles quenching their thirst at a river in a time of drought. The very scent of the water gives them new life; they dash into the water; they drink and drink again, and deeper drink; they cling to the dear stream, while every part of their body shivers with joy. Even as the flowing streams give deep delight to the panting gazelle, so God's grace solaces every soul that keenly feels its great needs. Blessed is he that thirsteth for God, for he shall be satisfied.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 77.

## THE WONDERFUL RIVER

PSALM XLVI. 4.

IN a certain royal city, the palace of the king and the houses of his servants were warmed and served by a river, which flowed underground. One of the strange things about the river was that it did not freeze in the depth of winter, or grow hot in the height of summer; all the year long it remained very nearly of one temperature. As pipes were laid from the river to all the rooms of the palace, the rooms were pleasantly warm at all times. But the river had more wonderful qualities than this. The king was told that every night the water flowed through fine pipes to the windows of the palace, and washed them clean and bright. A yet more curious fact, so the king was told, was that the river made all the repairs that were required in the palace and the city. Certainly, workmen were never seen in the streets; no sound of hammering or sawing was ever heard there; no rubbish or litter lay about in the city. All that was necessary was that some of the king's servants should shoot into the river bricks, stones, glass, wood, iron, gold, silk, wool, zinc, whatever was likely to be needed. There was a pit at a certain place in the city where these things might be tumbled into the river, which carried them off, sorted them, and used them just as they were wanted. A new pane of glass would take the place of a broken one; a fresh beam of timber would grow where a beam had been displaced; a new telegraph wire stretched itself when an old one gave way. The river repaired everything—marble columns, ivory furniture, soft cushions, musical instruments, anything and everything. Nor was this all. The river kept its own walls and pipes



in good order. When one of the walls grew thin by the constant wear of its flowing, it was quickly thickened and mended and cemented by the river itself, and the small pipes were steadily and incessantly renewed.

Perhaps you will ask whether the river did not grow foul? Yes, it did, because it washed into itself all the rubbish, when it had mended anything—sawdust, and broken stone, and rags, and chips, and bits of glass, and odds and ends of all kinds. But this wonderful river flowed regularly to filter-beds, which had been prepared for it, and as it passed through the filter-beds, all the rubbish was strained out of it, and it flowed on cleansed and purified.

You will not be surprised that the king wished to understand more fully how the river came, and how it flowed out to the filter-beds and returned. The continual running of a river, which had no spring as its source and no outlet to a sea, greatly puzzled him. He was informed by his servants that there was a deep well into which the river ran, and that a strange kind of pump forced the water up again. They took him to a spot where he could hear something like the thud of a pump, but who worked it, or how it was worked, he could not clearly understand.

Then the king began to inquire how the water of the river could do so many astonishing things, and some of his counsellors said that there were living creatures in the river, which swam about unseen, but always noting what needed to be done. They said that when one of the creatures saw that a piece of work ought to be done, it would instantly set about the doing of it, even at the cost of its own life. Others of the king's wise men were not so sure about the invisible creatures, but of one thing there could be no doubt, that the work was done.

You will agree with me that this river was wonderful. It was, in fact, much more so than I have been able to tell you. Perhaps you know already that every word of the tale is true. The city is your body, its palace is your brain, its king is your mind. The river is your blood, into which you pour material—bread and butter, and milk, and other food—and the river builds columns, which are your bones, and stretches telegraph wires, which are your nerves, and cleanses the palace windows, which are your eyes, and mends and tunes the musical instruments which produce your voice, and renews and enlarges your brain, and makes whatever needs to be made. The well with its marvellous pump is your heart, and the filter-beds are your lungs. And the invisible living creatures, or what some of the wise men took to be such, what are they? Ask your teacher to tell you about the 'white corpuscles' in your blood. If you go on to think about the subject, you will want to ask many questions, and the answers will be more astounding than anything I have told you. You may link a Bible word with your thoughts. 'There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,' for your body should be a city of God, who built it for your soul, and made it wonderful and

beautiful, and Himself loves to dwell in it with you.—JOHN A. HAMILTON, *The Wonderful River*, p. 11

### THE RIVER OF THE CITY OF GOD

'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.'—PSALM XLVI. 4.

I. A RIVER is an immense blessing to any city through which it passes. It makes the city 'glad'.

The great full-breasted river gives *glory* to the city. Florence, on the Arno, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world; but the finest streets in it—where the great hotels are, and where the visitors go—are the broad and handsome quays called 'Lung' Arno (that is, Along the Arno), which extend along both banks of the stream.

The river contributes *character* to the city. London is made much more attractive than it would otherwise be by the Thames, as it winds about in picturesque bends through and through the city, all the way from Hammersmith to Greenwich. Paris would be poorer and less beautiful if it wanted the Seine, with its bridges and islands. And what would Glasgow be without its ship-laden Clyde; or Liverpool, if its six miles of docks along the Mersey were destroyed? How interesting, too, are the city bridges over the river! Take, for example, Chester, where 'the sacred Dee' is spanned not only by the old bridge of seven arches, but also by the new or Grosvenor bridge, with one single arch two hundred feet in length, being the second largest span of a stone bridge in the world.

The river also may bring *good things* to the city. It is often the main source of its material prosperity. It carries away its refuse to the sea, and pours health down into it from the hills. Sometimes by means of the river the besieged city is saved from a horrible famine. The great siege of Londonderry lasted for one hundred and five days; and how was it, after such prolonged distress, that the starving citizens were relieved? By three ships which came up the river Foyle, laden with provisions. They dashed bravely against the barricade in the stream, and broke it down, and at once emptied their treasures on the quay, making the city glad.

II. I have mentioned the names of a number of different cities, with their rivers. But the city referred to in this Psalm is 'the city of God'. What city is that?

It is quite common to connect different cities with certain things or persons. Thus, for example, Manchester is the city of cotton; Birmingham is the city of metallic manufactures; Dundee is the city of jute; Leipzig is the city of books; Florence is the city of flowers; Jericho is the city of palm-trees; Constantinople is the city of Constantine the Great; St. Petersburg is the city of Peter the Great. But what a splendid title we have here—'the city of God'! And what an honour to any city to be called by such a name! The boys and girls know that it is Jerusalem—'the holy city' of the Holy Land—that is God's own city. It was there that the Temple of God stood.

Mount Zion was the place which the Lord had chosen 'to put His name there'.

This great river of the grace of God flows through the Church. It gladdens and blesses 'the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High'. Since the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, it has been a far larger and broader and deeper stream than it ever was before. It began to flow with full flood on the day of Pentecost: on that day the waters suddenly rose, and ever since they have been 'waters to swim in'.

And while the river flows in all its breadth through the Church, it is also 'parted,' like the river of Paradise, into many branches. Our text speaks of the river, and then it refers to the 'streams' from it. These are the divisions or canals into which it is broken up. One of these streams comes into every home which belongs to the Church, and makes that home glad. And not only into every household, but into every heart. The very last invitation of the Bible is, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely'.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 10.

#### A CLEAN HEART CREATED AND RENEWED

'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'—PSALM LI. 10.

WHAT a very remarkable word is the first word of my text! Will you look at it? 'Create'! Let us think a little about 'creating'. 'Creating' is different from making.

If a little boy is a carpenter, he can make a boat; but he does not make the wood of which the boat is made; he does not make the chisel that he works with; he does not make the little hand that holds the chisel. This is God's work. Man makes; but God 'creates'. 'In the beginning,' the Bible says, 'God created and made the world.' First, He 'created' it—that is, He made all out of nothing; and then He 'made'—that is, He arranged it.

What a wonderful thing 'creating' must be! Just think about it.

I suppose it is like this—we cannot quite understand it, but it is something like this. God thinks in His mind. Then He thinks in His mind, 'I wish that what I think in My mind shall be'. Then it is. He thinks of something that nobody has ever seen, and nobody has ever thought of. He thinks it, and there it is. We cannot do that.

For instance, God thought of the sun. Nobody had ever seen a sun. He thought, 'I wish there to be a sun'; and the sun rolled out in the skies. He thought of an elephant, a lion, etc. Nobody had ever seen such animals: but God thought of them in His mind, and said, 'I wish them to be'; and there walked a lion and there walked an elephant. That is 'creating'.

Now, I suppose what David thought, when he wrote this verse was this: 'My heart is so bad, nothing can be made of it—so there must be "a new heart" altogether. It must be "created"—something made

out of nothing. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." He thought that to be a Christian, to be a 'clean,' holy man, was like something 'created'.

And this is just what it says throughout the Bible. Will you turn to 2 Corinthians v. 17, and you will see then just what it says, viz. that when a man is made good, it is like being 'created'. We will read it together if you please, 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature'—that means he is 'created'—made new: 'he is a new creature'.

There was one thing that was very wise in David when he wrote this verse. I will tell you what it was. You know David had been very naughty: he had taken another man's wife—we have been reading about it; and then he killed the husband. But David did not think about his wicked acts—that is what most people would have done—but he thought of his wicked 'heart,' out of which those acts had come. That is what I wish you to do.

Perhaps some one tells a lie; and, after doing so, he says, 'I am very sorry: I am determined I will never tell a lie again. I will guard my words and take care what I say.'

Or, perhaps some little girl has gone into a dreadful passion, and even actually struck somebody; and then she thinks afterwards, 'Oh, what a wicked thing it was for me to get into such a passion. I will never do so again. I will keep a guard over my hands, and I am sure I will never strike anybody again.'

Poor little boy and girl! you do not know what you are talking about. I am sure that little boy will tell a lie again, if this is all he does; and that little girl will strike again. Each ought to say, 'What a wicked heart I have: I must think about my heart'. Jesus Christ says that all evil comes from thence. Then say, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me'.

If you do not go that way to work, I will tell you what you are doing—you are putting 'new wine into old bottles'. Look at Matthew ix. 17. When anybody says, 'I will lead a new life,' and does not try to have a better 'heart,' he is 'putting new wine into old bottles'; he wants to put new conduct into an old 'heart'. This will not do. God says it will not. It will never last. That is the reason many boys and girls set out on Sunday to try to be good; but before Tuesday or Wednesday comes, they are as bad as ever. They try to build new lives upon old feelings. They ought to try to get their 'hearts' changed—'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me'. Therefore, to pray this prayer was very wise in David.

When you begin to think and feel about your own hearts, you will be surprised to find how much evil there is in them.

There was a missionary who went out to the South Seas, and I will tell you of a conversation he had one day with the captain of a ship that went out to catch whales. He talked with him a long time about Jesus Christ; and the captain, being a heathen, did not

understand him; and at last the captain said: 'It is of no use your talking to me. I cannot understand you. I cannot receive your words into my mind. I have been twenty-three months out for whales, and I cannot look for anything else. If you were to look into my heart you would see a whale there; and I have no heart for anything else. My heart is filled up with a whale.'

He spoke honestly. A great many people have their hearts full of whales. Some little boys and girls in this church, that ought to be now listening to me, have their hearts filled with a whale. I do not know what it is—play or something else; but there is no room for God! A troublesome thing is the 'heart'.

Now I am going to tell you one thing about the 'heart'—it is very unclean. What is the most unclean thing you can think of? What an unclean thing is dirty water! God says your heart is like nasty, dirty water. Look at Isaiah lvi. 20, 'But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.'

Now I am going to tell you how we can get our hearts 'clean'. Perhaps it is rather too deep for you. I know that some boys and girls will say, 'The Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin!' Yes, that is true, but it is not enough.

Look at the beginning of Genesis. Observe, David says, 'Create'. Now, how does God 'create'? The first of Genesis, and the second verse, will tell you how He 'creates' out of nothing. The first thing is, 'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters'. There would have been no creation without this. Then the second thing (ver. 3), 'and God said, Let there be light; and there was light'. Then turn to the first of John, where it says of Christ, 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made'.

So then, three things must happen before anything can be 'created'. Do attend to this, it is not difficult. The Spirit of God must 'move upon the face' of it, the Word of God must 'speak' to it, and the Blood of Christ must 'wash' it. Nothing ever was 'created' without these three things. If these do not take place, there can be no 'creation'.

Let us look at them. The first thing is, the Spirit of God must 'move' over it. If you wish to be God's children indeed, the Holy Spirit must work in your heart. As the 'spirit moved over the face of the waters,' so must the Holy Spirit 'move' in your 'hearts'.

The Holy Spirit is often compared to water, because water makes clean. Look at Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—it is a beautiful passage, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you,' that is, the Holy Ghost.

Now, then, we will think about the Bible, which is the Word of God. When God made the Word, He 'spake with His mouth'. Now His speech is in the Bible. Can you think of some verse that says it is

through the Bible we are to have our hearts cleansed? Turn to it if you can. There is a beautiful verse in John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth'. That will do; but there is one still clearer in Ephesians v. 26, 'That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water (that is, the Holy Ghost) by the word,' that is, the Bible.

And now, Jesus Christ, we know, must cleanse it too. Will you look at I John i. 7, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin'.

So now, you see, there are three things to be done if we would have a 'clean heart created'. The Holy Spirit must work in our hearts; we must read the Bible, think much about the Bible; and look to Jesus Christ, whose 'blood cleanseth from all sin'.

A Christian boy likes his hands, and everything, to be 'clean'. I never knew a Christian who did not wish everything to be 'clean'. Cleanliness marks a Christian. But hands will get dirty again, although you wash them. So will your soul—though washed in the blood of Christ. Therefore, pray 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me'.

Good Robert Hall, when a boy, used to get into a dreadful rage; and, whenever he felt it coming on, he used to say, 'O Lamb of God! calm my mind,' and it caused him to grow up the gentlest man almost that ever lived—though a very passionate boy.

And I believe if boys and girls would say and pray this earnestly, at the bottom of their hearts, they would find the benefit of it. Let us all say it together in conclusion, and not only say it, but let us stand up and pray it in our hearts, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### SORROW FOR SIN

'A broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.'  
—PSALM LI. 17.

It is by overcoming our sins that we are to dig down the hills and fill up the valleys, and make the rough places smooth and the crooked straight, until at last there is a perfectly straight road for God to come into our hearts.

And what is the way to overcome our sins? Repentance.

Yes, it is by repenting of our sins that we shall overcome them. We cannot overcome them in any other way. And I want to explain to you what repentance means. You have all heard, I have no doubt, of repenting of our sins, but perhaps some of you have mistaken ideas as to what repentance really means. So I will try to explain to you, first, what repentance is *not*.

I. Repentance does *not* mean simply *saying* we are sorry for what we have done wrong, because we are told to say we are sorry, or told we must be sorry.

Supposing, for instance, a child gets into a naughty temper, and is told by her friends they will not



speak to her again until she says she is sorry for it, and so she does *say* she is sorry for it, but all the time is crying with temper, and stamping her foot on the ground; is that being sorry for her sin really? No.

No, that is not really being sorry at all, and is not repentance, because the child is in just as bad a temper as she was before, and repentance does *not* mean just *saying* we are sorry, while all the time we go on doing the very thing we say we are sorry for.

And I will tell you another thing that is *not* repentance for our sins, and that is crying very much when some one tells us about our sins, and promising we will never do that thing again, and then forgetting all about what was said to us, and all about the promise we made, and very soon doing just the thing we promised not to do.

That is *not* repentance; and it is only telling a lie, if we promise not to do a thing, and then break our promise, and do the same thing again; because if we had really repented we should have remembered our promise, and tried to keep it.

And repentance does *not* mean being sorry because we have been found out in something wrong, and are afraid now of being punished for it. We are not really sorry that we have sinned, and offended God, but are only sorry that we shall have to suffer for it. If we really repented we should be sorry for having offended God, and should know that we quite deserved any punishment we got for doing it.

Let us think now what repentance really *does* mean.

II. Repentance means being *really sorry that we have offended God* who is always so good to us, and the only thanks we have given Him is to do the things He hates, and that caused Jesus to suffer on the cross; and so we *determine to give up our sin*, whatever it may be, because it is hateful to God, and because we love God so much that we will not cause Him grief, and we determine that, with God's help, we will be on our guard against that sin, and will often pray to God to help us to overcome it, and will not leave off praying till the temptation to that sin goes away. That is repentance.

Although we must ask God to forgive us our sins, we shall not be quite at peace with ourselves and with Him until we have confessed our sins not only to Him, but also to anyone we have sinned against. Suppose you have told a lie, or have done anything else that you know is wrong, then you must not only tell God how sorry you are, but you must also tell whoever you have sinned against how sorry you are, and ask for their forgiveness as well as God's.

You see, when the Prodigal Son repented of his sins, he did not only have to confess to God, and get His forgiveness, but he had also to confess to his father, against whom he had sinned, and get his father's forgiveness, as well as God's before he could be quite happy again—'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in *thy* sight'.

I will tell you a story Canon Keymer told showing

that we must ask our friend's forgiveness, as well as God's, before we can feel quite happy and quite forgiven. He told of a little girl who had stolen a penny from the money box in her father's shop; she had broken the Eighth Commandment. What does that say? 'Thou shalt not steal.'

Well, when she stole that penny she broke the Eighth Commandment, and she soon began to feel very unhappy, and her conscience tormented her very much, and she asked God to forgive her, and next time she had a penny she put it into the box, instead of the one she had stolen, and then another penny still, and another, and yet she could not feel at peace, because she had not confessed her sin to her father, and told him what she had done. She was afraid to do that, because she was afraid her father would be angry with her; but her conscience still tormented her so much that at last she told her father what she had done, and then at last she felt happy again, and when she was asked what her father said to her, she said, 'He never said anything, he only kissed me'.

And so you will find it; you will never feel perfectly happy and forgiven until you have told your friends, as well as God, what you have done wrong, and been forgiven by them.

But it will not always be easy for us to do better, even when we are forgiven. The devil will tempt us to do wrong, and tell us there is no harm in it, and he will make people who do not love Jesus laugh at us, and call us unkind names; but we must tell God all about it, and ask Him for strength to bear it, and He will help us to resist the devil.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 114.

## WISHING FOR WINGS

PSALM LV. 6.

KING DAVID WAS one of the wisest of men; yet he is not ashamed to tell us that one day he could not help wishing for what he knew was impossible. He wished for wings. The reason was, that he was so grieved with the wickedness of a great many of the people among whom he lived, that he longed to get away to some quiet valley, among lonely mountains and forests, where he could be alone with God. So he said, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest' (Ps. lv. 6).

Other people besides King David have wished for wings. A little boy was sitting in school one bright summer morning. Looking up from his book, he could see through the open window the finches and tom-tits hopping among the trees, and the swallows skimming over the grass. And he could not help saying to himself, 'Oh that I had wings! for then I would fly out of school, and do nothing but play with the birds in the sunshine'. By the by, he did not know that the birds were not at play, but hard at work, catching flies and grubs to feed their young ones. Perhaps you knew that little boy. Or was it a little girl you knew who wished for wings? Well, let me give you a word of advice about this.

**I. Don't Spend your Time in Wishing for Wings,** or for anything else that is impossible. Not that there is anything wrong in a wish, unless what we wish for is wrong. Wishes will come flying into our minds, as little birds sometimes hop in at an open window. But do not pet and fondle them. Let them fly away again. There was nothing wrong in King David's saying, 'Oh that I had wings!' but it would have been very wrong and very foolish if he had wasted his time in longing for wings, and murmuring and grumbling because he could not have them. Wishing is profitless work, even for possible things. No one ever got to the top of a mountain, or even to the top of a ladder, by wishing he were up there. No! you must climb, step by step.

**II. God gave David Something much Better than Wings.**—Read verses 16, 17, 22 of Psalm LV., and look at the last six words of verse 23, and you will see how this was. Often God denies our wishes, that He may give us something better than we ask or think. A pair of dove's wings would be useless, unless you had a dove's body; or eagle's, unless you had an eagle's body. 'Oh, but that's just what I should like—to be a bird, just for a little time.' Is it? Then, perhaps, you would wish for legs like a gazelle, or fins like a whale. One can't have everything. And yet I remember that St. Paul says to real Christians, 'All things are yours, . . . and ye are Christ's' (1 Cor. ii. 21). The Lord Jesus needed no wings to fly up to heaven. And we need no wings to get near enough to Him to talk to Him. When you pray to Him He listens, and hears every word, as though He stood close to you. Ask Him to help you to use your hands and feet in His service. Love to Him will be better than the winged shoes you read of in the old Greek fables. It will make your feet swift and your hands nimble for every duty, and every kindness. It will give wings to your thoughts, so that they will fly up to Him, and then come back fresher and more earnest to your work. Then, when the time comes, He will give you what is far better than wings; He will come and receive you to Himself, that where He is, you may be also.—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 120.

### THE BEAUTY OF THE KING'S LESSONS

'What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee.'—PSALM LVI. 3.

*THE LESSON OF TRUST.*—Perhaps some of you may think that grown-up men ought never to be afraid. But this is a mistake. Strong men, and good, and wise, and brave, are sometimes afraid; yes, and they have reason to be afraid. David was a man when he wrote this Psalm. He was a strong man, a wise, a good, and brave man. He was a great king and a great soldier. He had fought many great battles, and gained many great victories. When he was only a boy he was not afraid to go alone and fight with the wild beasts—the lion and the bear—that stole away the lambs from his flocks. And when the great Philistine giant, Goliath, came to defy the army of

Israel and challenged any of their soldiers to come and fight with him, the bravest among them were afraid of him, and were ready to run away as soon as they saw him. But David was not afraid of him. Although he was only a lad and had never been in a battle, yet he went bravely out, all by himself, without a sword, without a shield, or spear, or a bit of armour on, and with nothing in his hand but his sling and his stone, he fought with that great monster of a man. David was a very brave man. And yet he was not ashamed to speak about the times when he felt afraid. And if this was so with David, it may well be so with us. We need not be ashamed to say that there are times when we are afraid. The one great thing that makes people afraid is—sin. Sin and fear always go together. If we were not sinners we never should be afraid. The good angels are not afraid, because they have never sinned. Adam and Eve never knew what fear was till after they had sinned. But then, as soon as they heard God speaking to them, 'they hid themselves among the trees of the garden, because they were afraid'. And so, if we did not know that we were sinners, we should have nothing to fear. It is only sin that makes us afraid. But, because we are sinners, there are many times when we are afraid. Some persons are afraid to be alone; afraid to be in the dark; afraid when it thunders; afraid when they are sick; afraid when they are in a storm at sea; and afraid when they are going to die. David speaks here of the times when he was afraid, but he does not tell us what those times were. Yet he shows us here how to get rid of our fear, or what to do when we are afraid. He says, 'What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee'.

The subject which this text brings before us is—*The lesson of trust.* It is one of the lessons we are taught by Jesus our King; and we may see the king's beauty in the lessons that He teaches.

I wish to speak of three things that may help us to learn this lesson of trust when we are afraid. Each of these three things begins with the letter P; and so it may help us to remember this sermon if we think of the three P's.

**I. And the First Thing that should Lead us to Trust in God when we are Afraid is the Thought of His 'Presence.'**—But the thought of God's presence affects different people in different ways. If we do not love God, and are not trying to serve Him, it will not comfort us to think about Him. I suppose it was when David was living in sin that he said, 'I remembered God and was troubled'. When we know that we are doing wrong we want to get away from God, or to forget all about Him.

I remember hearing of a girl who went into a room belonging to the gentleman for whom she worked—a room that was not often used—in order to steal something. Hanging over the mantel was a portrait of the gentleman's father. The girl looked at this portrait, and its eyes seemed to be gazing at her. Whatever part of the room she went to, those eyes followed her. She felt uncomfortable. 'I can't steal

while those eyes are looking straight at me,' she said to herself. Then she got a chair, and took a pair of scissors, and bored out the eyes of the portrait. And when she felt that she was rid of those troublesome eyes, she went on to steal as she wished to do. But she forgot that God's eyes were looking at her, and that she never could put them out.

That is the way the thought of God makes us feel when we are doing wrong. But when we love God, and feel that He is our best friend, then the thought of His presence always gives us comfort and takes away our fear.

*Trust in God.*—'Mother,' said a little girl, 'what did David mean when he said, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust"?'

'Do you remember,' said her mother, 'the little girl we saw walking with her father in the woods yesterday?'

'Oh yes, mother, wasn't she beautiful?'

'She was a gentle, loving little thing, and her father was very kind to her. Do you remember what she said when they came to the narrow bridge over the brook?'

'I don't like to think about that bridge, mother; it makes me giddy. Don't you think it is very dangerous—just those two loose planks laid across, and no railing? If she had stepped a little on either side, she would have fallen into the water.'

'Do you remember what she said?' asked the mother.

'Yes, ma. She stopped a minute, as if she was afraid to go over, and then looked up into her father's face and asked him to take hold of her hand, and said, "You will take hold of me, dear father; I don't feel afraid when you have hold of my hand". And her father looked so lovingly upon her, and took tight hold of her hand, as if she were very precious to him.'

'Well, my child,' said the mother, 'I think David felt just like that little girl when he wrote the words you have asked me about.'

'Was David going over a bridge, mother?'

'Not such a bridge as the one we saw in the woods; but he had come to some difficult place in his life, there was some trouble before him that made him feel afraid; and he looked up to God, just as that little girl looked to her father, and said, "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust". It is just as if he had said, "Please take care of me, my kind Heavenly Father; I do not feel afraid when Thou art with me and taking hold of my hand".'

And here we see what David means in our text when he says, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee'. The thought of God's presence took away his fear and gave him comfort. This helped him to learn the lesson of trust.

*A boy's faith.*—Two little boys were talking together about a lesson they had been receiving from their grandmother on the subject of Elijah's going to heaven in the chariot of fire. 'I say, Charley,' said

George, 'but wouldn't you be afraid to ride in such a chariot?'

'Why, no,' said Charley, 'I shouldn't be afraid, if I knew that the Lord was driving.'

And that was just the way David felt when he said, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee'. He knew that neither chariots of fire, nor anything else could hurt him, if God was present as his protector and friend.

**II. The Second Thing that should Lead us to Learn this Lesson is the Thought of God's 'Power'.**

—Suppose we go and stand upon a rock by the seashore where the waves are dashing up. How strong that rock seems! The waves roll up and break in foam upon it, but they can neither move it nor shake it. And if we look at the rock when the waves roll back and leave it bare, we shall find a number of tiny little shell-fish clinging to the sides of the rock. These are very weak. They have no power at all to resist the waves that dash against the rock. If they were left to themselves, the first wave that came would sweep them all away. But God has given them the tiniest little sort of fingers with which they can take fast hold of the rock. And when the great rolling waves come up, and sweep over the rock, they cling to its side and are safe.

And God's power is to us just what that rock is to the little shell-fish. And our faith in God is just like those little fingers by which the shell-fish cling to the rock. And so when we are afraid, the thought of God's power should lead us to trust in Him.

A gentleman was walking down a street one morning when he saw a little blind boy standing on the sidewalk, with his head bent forward as if listening for something. Stepping up to him he said:—

'Shall I help you across the street, my little friend?'

'Oh no, thank you, sir; I'm waiting for my father.'

'Can you trust your father!'

'Oh yes; my father always takes good care of me. He leads me all the time, and when he has hold of my hand I feel perfectly safe.'

'But why do you feel safe?'

'Raising his sightless eyes, with a sweet smile and a look of perfect trust, the dear boy said, "Oh, sir, because my father knows the way. I am blind, but he can see. I am weak, but he is strong."'

And this is just the kind of feeling we should have towards God. *He knows the way, and He is strong.* The thought of His power should lead us to trust Him, when we are afraid.

*Perfect trust.*—A gentleman was walking one evening with his little girl upon a high bank, beneath which ran a canal. The child was pleased with the look of the glistening water, and coaxed her father to take her down to it.

'The water looks so pretty. Please, papa, do take me down there,' she said.

The bank was very steep and the road a mere sheep path. In getting down the gentleman had to



take hold of his little girl's arms and swing her from point to point. While doing this she would sometimes be hanging in the air, directly over the water. Yet she only laughed and chuckled, but was not the least bit afraid, although she really seemed to be in great danger.

At last they got down the bank and reached the tow-path in safety. Then taking up his daughter in his arms he said, 'Now tell me, Sophy, why you were not afraid when you were swinging in the air, right over the water?'

Nestling her plump little cheek upon her father's face, she said:—

'Papa had hold of Sophy's hand; Sophy couldn't fall!'

This was very sweet. Here was a perfect trust. And this is just the feeling that David had towards God when he said, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee'. Sophy would have screamed with terror to find herself hanging over the water in the canal, unless she had confidence in the person who had hold of her arms. But it was her father—her kind, loving father—who held her, and so, 'what time she would have been afraid she trusted in him'. And this is the feeling that we ought to have towards God. The thought of His power should lead us to trust in Him.

*The anxious ambassador.*—There is a good story told of an English ambassador that illustrates this part of our subject very well. It took place more than two hundred years ago, during the time of Oliver Cromwell. That was a period of revolution and war and of great trouble in England. The gentleman to whom I refer had been appointed ambassador to the Court of Sweden. He had reached a seaport town from which he was to sail the next morning. He expected to be absent from his country for some time, and things were in such an unsettled state that he felt very much distressed at the idea of being away. He kept thinking about the country, and was so much troubled that he couldn't sleep. He had a servant with him, who was a good Christian man, and had learned well this lesson of trust. He was sorry to see his master so worried and troubled about the country. So he came to him and said, 'Please, sir, will you allow me to ask you one or two questions?'

'Certainly,' said the ambassador.

'Well, sir, don't you think that God governed the world very well before you came into it?'

'Undoubtedly He did.'

'And don't you think He will be able to govern it quite as well when you are taken out of it?'

'Certainly He will.'

'Then, sir, please excuse me, but don't you think you may as well trust Him to govern it while you are in it?'

To this he could give no answer. But it had a good effect upon him. It showed him the folly of trying to take the government out of God's hands. He quit worrying. He cast away his fear. He

trusted the country to God, and went quietly to sleep.

Just one other short illustration on this point.

*The lost boy's trust.*—A little boy and his brother were lost in a western forest. After being out a day and a night they were found. In giving an account of what took place while they were in the woods, the little fellow said:—

'When it got dark I knelt down and asked God to take care of little Jimmy and me, and then we went to sleep!'

How simple, how beautiful that was! That little boy was feeling, and acting, just as King David did when he said: 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.' And so from all these examples, we see that the second thing which should lead us to learn the lesson of trust in God, is the thought of His power.

**III. The Third Thing that should lead us to Learn this Lesson is the Thought of God's 'Promises.'**—

God's promises are given to us on purpose to help us in trying to learn this lesson of trust. These promises are made to apply to all the times and circumstances in which we are most likely to be afraid. Sometimes we are afraid that our strength will fail, and that we shall not be able to do what we have to do. And then God gives us this sweet promise: 'Fear not, I am with thee; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand of My righteousness' (Is. XLII. 10). Sometimes, we are afraid of the anger and violence of wicked men, and then God says to us, as He did to His servant Abraham of old, 'Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward' (Gen. xv. 1). Sometimes we are afraid of the troubles and afflictions we may have to meet, as we go on in life; and then God gives us this precious promise, 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Is. XLIII. 2). The waters and the fires spoken of here mean trials and afflictions; but if God is only with us we need not be afraid of them. Sometimes, when we think of dying, and of going above into an unknown world, we feel afraid, and our hearts sink within us. But, even when we think of meeting death, we may take up the language of David, and say: 'Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil; for Thou art with us; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort us' (Ps. xxiii. 4). God promises to 'make all things work together for good to them that love Him' (Rom. viii. 28). And all these promises are given to teach us the lesson of trust when we are afraid.

*A child's trust in God's promises.*—Here is a story of a poor little German boy who had learned this lesson of trust from God's promises in the Bible. He wanted to enter the Moravian school to get an education; but his widowed mother was too poor to

send him. So he wrote a letter and directed it thus—'To the Lord Jesus Christ—in heaven'—and dropped it into the post-office. The letter ran thus:—

'MY LORD AND SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST,

'I have lost my father, and we are very poor. But Thou hast promised, in Thy word, that whatsoever we shall ask of God, in Thy name, He will give it to us. I believe what Thou sayest, Lord. I ask then, in the name of Jesus, that God will give my mother the money to send me to the Moravian school. I should like so much to go on with my learning. I pray unto Thee already; but I will love Thee more.'

The postmaster was very much surprised at the direction on the letter. He knew that the mail had no connection with that country, and that it was impossible to send the letter to heaven; so he opened it and read it. He gave it to a member of the Moravian Church. It was read at a meeting of their society. A rich lady present was so much interested in it, that she took charge of the little boy, and sent him to school as he desired.

*A child's faith.*—Johnny Hall was a poor boy. His mother worked hard for their daily bread. 'Please give me something to eat, for I am very hungry,' he said to her one evening. His mother let the work that she was sewing fall upon her knees and drew Johnny towards her. As she kissed him the tears fell fast on his face, while she said, 'Johnny, my dear, I have not a penny in the world. There is not a morsel of bread in the house, and I cannot give you any supper to-night.'

Johnny didn't cry when he heard this. He was but a little fellow, but he had learned the lesson of trust in God's promises. He had great faith in the sweet words of Jesus when He said, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will do it'.

'Never mind, mamma, I shall soon be asleep, and then I shan't feel hungry. But you must sit here and sew, hungry and cold. Poor mamma!' he said, as he threw his arms round her neck and kissed her many times to comfort her.

Then he knelt down by his mother's side to say his prayers after her. They said, 'Our Father' till they came to the petition, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. The way in which his mother said these words made Johnny's heart ache. He stopped and looked at her, and repeated them with his eyes full of tears—'Give us this day our daily bread'. When they got through he looked at his mother and said, 'Now, mother, don't be afraid. We shall never be hungry any more. God is our Father. He has promised to hear us, and *I am sure He will.*'

Then he went to bed. Before midnight he woke up, while his mother was still at work, and asked if the bread had come yet. She said, 'No, but I am sure it will come'.

In the morning, before Johnny was awake, a gentleman called, who wanted his mother to come to his

house and take charge of his two motherless children. She agreed to go. He left some money with her. She went out at once to buy some things for breakfast. And when Johnny awoke the bread was there and all that he needed. Johnny is a man now; but he has never wanted bread from that day; and whenever he was afraid, since then, he has remembered God's promises and trusted in Him.

Let us remember these three P's, the *presence*, the *power*, and the *promises* of God, and this will help us to learn the lesson of trust. And in all our times of danger and of trial let us try to follow the example of David, when he said, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee'.—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 139.

### A STRONG TOWER

'A strong tower from the enemy.'—PSALM LXI. 3.

LET us think of the Lord as a strong tower.

I. And first we should remember **That the Children**

**Wanted such a Refuge just as much as the Grown-up People did.**—It would never have done for the mother to have left her little child, or the father his boys and maidens. The enemy would have carried them away as slaves, or perhaps have killed them. The children needed a tower quite as much as anybody else. And you need it to-day. There is still a strong prince with a great army who is as cruel and fierce as ever he was. He is called the prince of this world, and he goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Nothing pleases him more than to tempt boys and girls into his service, that he may make them his slaves. Ah, what a cruel master he is! Nothing ever satisfies him. Even when his slaves have done all they can for him, and spent their lives in his service, he drags them down to his own dreadful abode. From this cruel enemy Jesus is come to be our strong tower, and we must run away to Him and there seek refuge from this enemy.

II. Nor is this the only enemy that we need the strong tower. **We have often to run away from Ourselves.**—As I stood one day on a ruined castle I thought of some good work that it had done. Besides the foes that came from afar off there were bad men who gathered together in the woods, and lived as wild robbers, often taking the goods and cattle of the people, and sometimes murdering them. Then the lord of the castle would go forth with his knights and search out these cruel robbers, and destroy their refuges and kill the chief of them; or he would bring them back, laden with chains, and shut them up in a deep dungeon, so that they could do no more harm. You know how such evil things dwell in our hearts—our tempers perhaps are passionate and set us all on fire, like these robbers used to do to the cottages and homes of the people. The feelings sometimes are full of anger and hatred, like those cruel men. Now for them too the Lord is a strong tower. He comes forth with His strong right hand to destroy this nest of robbers. He can lead them chained, and shut them up in His deep

dungeon, so that they shall not hurt or destroy any more. In the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, John gives us a wonderful picture of this glorious Lord and His army going forth to make war against His enemies. Let us come up to Him against the evils that trouble us. He shall be our strong tower from the enemy.

III. The next thing I want you to think of is this, **That the Gateway was always Opened to Children.**—I sometimes see notices like this, 'Children not admitted'. I am quite sure that was never put up outside the strong tower. If they made way for anybody it was for the children. I think if the captain ever put out his hand to help anybody it was to help a little child. When the drawbridge was pulled up and the gate barred, and the enemy hastening on, some poor fellow might have stood on the other side of the moat and cried for help, and I am not sure that they would run the risk of trying to save him. But if a little child had stood and held out its hands, I am quite sure that then the bolts were hurled back, and the drawbridge was lowered, and some brave soldier sprang forth to snatch up that child, and with a shower of arrows at his heels, bore it right into the strong tower. Here none are more welcome than children; I had almost said none are so welcome. Every boy and maiden can sing of the great Lord in heaven, *Thou art my strong Tower from the enemy.* You can come in—you are not too little, you are not too young. That gate is never shut against a child. I have heard that when a steamer was on fire on one of the American lakes an emigrant was coming home with his hard-won gold. He fastened it to his waist and prepared to jump overboard to swim to shore, when a piteous little voice cried, 'Please, Sir, will you save me?' He looked for a moment at the tearful eyes. He must lose the gold or he must leave the child, he could not save both. In a moment he loosened the belt and let it drop; and then clasping the little one in his arms he sprang over and bore her safely to the shore. For us Jesus laid down His life; to save us He gave up Himself to the dreadful death of the cross. And now I am quite sure that when we come and ask Him to save us, He does take us into His arms and bear us safely into the strong tower of His love and of His salvation.

Think What a safe Refuge we have when the Lord is our strong Tower.—He is the Almighty. Some time ago I saw a great castle away on the south coast of England, and I looked with wonder at its great strength. It was built on the steep cliff that rose straight out of the sea, so that none could get to it that way. And above the cliff, batteries of cannon stretched away one above the other to the very top. I had to go through covered ways and past great gates and over drawbridges with deep moats, and by huge cannon, and past sentinels at every corner, until at last I stood on the top of it all. And as I looked down over it, and noticed its strength and its security, I began to think how much

stronger than all this is the Lord who was David's tower.

The Lord is our Refuge and Strength, but we have to keep the constant look out. Our enemy is very watchful and very cunning, and he will take us unawares unless we watch and pray. When I was a lad, one of my favourite stories was that of one Peter Williamson, a soldier. He was fighting against the Indians in Canada. Now every night the sentinel was shot with an arrow. No sound was heard, but there with an arrow in his breast they found each man in the morning. At last it came to Peter's turn to be on duty for the night. It was not a pleasant thing, and he resolved to keep a very sharp look out. I dare say he prayed to God to help him too. He began his watch in the clear shining of the moon, looking all about him, and resolved to fire if he heard so much as the rustle of a leaf. Then he thought of the way in which an Indian could creep along unseen in the bush, and shoot an arrow before he knew he was seen. So he hit upon this plan. He took off his soldier's cap and coat, and fastened them on the stump of a tree close by. Then he stood in the dark shadows and watched. The night wore on. When it was nearly dawn there was a rustle in the leaves. In a moment Peter lifted his musket. But presently he saw that it was only a bear. He certainly would not shoot at that unless it attacked him. It passed on under the trees and was hidden in the brushwood. Then whiz came the arrow, and stuck deep in the stump. In a moment Peter fired at the retreating bear, and it fell with a shriek of an Indian. Wrapped up in the skin and creeping stealthily along, the cunning Indian had thus disguised himself, and so killed the sentinels.

This is like what our enemy does very often. He comes up, and looks as hurt as to say, 'There is no harm in me. I won't hurt anybody.' And the sentinel does not suspect any mischief until the deadly arrow brings him in the dust.

Get into the tower, the blessed tower. And when you are there keep a sharp look out. Watch and pray. Stand on the watch tower looking out for the enemy, and be not ignorant of his devices. Remember what the Lord Jesus told His disciples, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch*.'—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 131.

#### LYING

'The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.'—  
PSALM LXIII. 12.

A LITTLE girl, nine years old, was brought into court as a witness against a prisoner who was on trial for a theft committed in her father's house. As she stood up in the usual place for giving testimony, the prisoner's lawyer said to her, 'Now, Emily, I desire to know if you understand the nature of an oath.'

'I don't know what you mean,' the child innocently answered, puzzled by the large words of the counsellor. 'There, your honour,' said the exultant lawyer, turning his sharp eye on the Judge, 'is anything



further necessary to demonstrate the validity of my objection? This witness should be rejected. She does not comprehend the nature of an oath.'

'Let me see,' replied the Judge. 'Come here, my child.'

The little girl immediately recovered her self-possession when thus kindly spoken to, and looked confidingly in the face of the Judge.

'Did you ever take an oath?' his honour inquired, in a quiet tone.

In her simplicity she thought he wished to know whether she had ever used profane language, and the blood mantled in her cheeks as she replied most emphatically, 'No, sir!'

The Judge at once saw the misapprehension under which she was labouring, and explained that he only meant to ask whether she had ever been a witness before.

The little girl answered, 'No, sir; I never was in court until to-day.'

He handed her a Bible, open, and said, 'Do you know that book, my child?'

'Yes, sir; it is the Bible.'

'Do you ever read it?' he continued.

'Yes, sir, every evening.'

'Can you tell me what the Bible is?' asked the Judge.

'It is the word of the great God,' said the child, with a grave and solemn expression on her gentle face.

'Well, place your hand upon the Bible and listen to what I say'; and he slowly repeated the oath usually administered to witnesses. 'Now you have been sworn as a witness,' remarked the Judge; 'will you tell me what will happen to you if you do not tell the truth?'

'I shall be shut up in State Prison,' was the ready answer.

'Anything else?' asked the Judge.

'I shall not go to heaven,' said the child, looking even graver than before.

'How do you know this?' asked the Judge.

The girl took the book and found the verse, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'. Pointing to the words, she said, 'I learned that before I could read'.

'Has anyone talked to you about being a witness in court here against this man?' inquired the Judge.

'Yes, sir,' she replied, 'my mother heard they wanted me for a witness, and last night she called me to her room and asked me to repeat the Ten Commandments; and then we knelt down, and she prayed that I might understand how wicked it was to bear false witness, and that God would help me to tell the truth. And when I came up here with father she kissed me, and told me to remember that God would hear all I said.'

'Do you believe that?' asked the Judge, a tear glistening in his eye.

'Yes, sir,' the child answered, with a tone of voice that showed her conviction of the truth she had uttered.

'God bless you,' said the Judge, 'you have a good mother'; then, turning to the lawyers and jury he continued: 'this witness is competent, and were I on trial for my life, and innocent of the charge against me, I would pray God for such a witness. Let her be examined.' The little girl told her story in a simple, straightforward way.

Then came the cross-examination, when the lawyer tried his utmost to make her vary from her first statement; but all to no purpose. Falsehood and perjury had preceded her testimony, but the child, for whom a mother had prayed for strength to be given her to speak the truth, broke the cunning devices of matured villainy in pieces, and the guilty was brought to justice.

Although it is the greatest possible insult to call a person a liar, the whole human family, whether barbarous or civilised, have been strangely given to this sin.

I suppose that very few people in Siam ever heard the words of our text, and yet it was an ancient custom there to punish a liar by sewing up his mouth!

A lie is an attempt to deceive, and we may tell one either by *word* or by *deed*. The person who points in the wrong direction, in order to mislead a traveller, or who closes the shutters to escape a dun, has, in the sight of God, been guilty of falsehood.

The text refers to the punishment of liars: '*The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped*'.

The same thing is referred to in another psalm, where David declares that 'the lying lips shall be put to silence, which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully speak against the righteous'.

Some of you will remember the startling account which is recorded in the fifth chapter of the Book of Acts, concerning Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who disposed of a farm, and hiding a part of the money received for it, brought the other part to the Apostles as an offering for the poor, pretending that it was the whole sum which the land had sold for. They were both struck dead in a moment.

It cannot be said that such things never happen in later times, now that miracles have ceased to be wrought. Examples enough could be brought forward to prove that they *do* occur; but I shall only mention two:—

In the market-town of Devizes, England, a woman named Ruth Pierce, with three others, agreed to join in the purchase of a sack of wheat, each paying an equal share for it.

One of the women, in collecting the money, found some of it lacking, and accused Ruth with not having paid her portion. Ruth insisted that she had, and even called on God to witness that she spoke the truth, saying, 'I hope I may be struck dead, if I am telling a lie!'

She was again entreated to pay her part of the money, and again she repeated her denial that she had kept back any, with the same awful appeal to the Almighty. The words were hardly spoken before she

dropped dead in the street—and the missing money was found grasped tightly in her stiffened hand!

As a warning to others in all after time, the mayor of Devizes had a stone pillar set up in the marketplace, on which was inscribed a brief account of this terrible affair.

One day as Archbishop Leighton was going from Glasgow to Dunblane a tremendous thunder-storm came on, and as he hastened towards a place of shelter he was seen by two men of very bad character, who were walking along the road which he was about to pass. Not having the courage to rob him, they contrived a plan to work upon his sympathy. One of them said to his companion, 'I will lie down by the wayside and pretend that I am dead, and you shall tell the Archbishop that I was killed by the lightning, and beg money to bury me.'

When the good man reached the spot the miserable wretch told his story, and, as he had expected, the Archbishop gave him money to bury his friend, and then hurried on his way. The wicked man waited until he had got a little way off, and then returned to his companion to share the purse with him. Finding him stone dead he cried out in terror, 'O! sir, he is dead! O! sir, he is dead!'

The Archbishop rode back, and when he beheld the ghastly spectacle he said, with as much reproach as he could put into his gentle tones, 'It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the judgment of God!'

These are instances in which the Almighty showed how displeased He is with liars, by stopping their mouths, in this world. If they escape punishment here and die impenitent and unpardoned, we are sure He will do it in the next. Hear His own words: '*All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*'.

Children very easily fall into the habit of telling falsehoods, and when this is once formed it is most difficult to overcome it. Will not all of you take warning by what has just been said, and struggle against this evil disposition, until you can say, with all sincerity, as the Psalmist did, '*As for lies, I hate and abhor them*'.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 151.

### THE RIVER OF GOD

PSALM LXV. 9.

If it were promised that you should see the *River of God*, would you not expect some great and wonderful sight? And if, then, some one led you to the window, and you saw the rain pouring down, would not you be much disappointed? 'Why,' you would say, 'I see no river at all! I only see a great many drops of rain.' Yes; but that is what the Bible (Ps. LXV. 9) calls 'the river of God, which is full of water.'

Let us have a little talk about this wonderful river. And, first—

**I. Where is its Fountain?**—Every river, you know, has a spring or fountain—some pool or rocky cavern where it first springs up out of the deep dark earth. But where is the fountain from which the

rain is fed? How is it that, however much rain comes pouring down from the sky, till it seems as if the clouds must rain themselves quite away, more clouds, full of rain, are always ready? The fountain of the rain is the great ocean. When the sun shines on the sea, especially in the Torrid Zone, it warms the water, and the water flies up into the air in invisible vapour or steam. So the air is always full of water, even when we cannot see a cloud in the sky. Then, when this steam gets high up in the air, where it is colder, it turns into little tiny drops, smaller than you can fancy, and these make the clouds. By and by these tiny little drops turn into larger drops, and fall down to the earth in rain. And thus it is that 'the river of God is full of water'.

**II. Where does this River Flow?**—Other rivers flow along in channels of rock or earth; but the river of the rain flows through the air, confined by no banks. It flows above the mountains, north, south, east, or west, wherever the wind may carry it. And so it is ready to send down its refreshing streams on hill, or valley, or plain, just whenever and wherever it is wanted. It falls on the mountains and moors, and comes streaming down their sides in little waterfalls, gathering into rushing torrents. It sinks down deep into the earth, and helps to fill the wells and springs. It falls on the pastures and meadows, and makes the grass grow for the sheep and cattle; and on the woods, and makes the buds burst out into leaf; and on the fields, and feeds the corn and the turnips, which are to give food for man and beast; and on the gardens, and the flowers seem to rejoice in it, and to praise God. Many a shower seems wasted; it falls on sandy deserts where nothing grows, or back into the sea from whence it came. Never mind, little raindrops, your turn will come! You have plenty of time! After you have rested awhile in the sandy waste, or floated about awhile in the salt sea, the sunshine will call you up again into the sky, to help to fill 'the river of God'.

The snow, too, and the hail, are part of 'the river of God'. For when the clouds rise very high in the air it is so cold that they are frozen, and turn to snow; or sometimes the rain is frozen as it falls, and then it is hail. And so the tops of all the highest mountains are covered with snow in summer as well as winter.

**III. What does this River do?**—It feeds all the other rivers. The great fields of snow and ice on the lofty mountains are always melting and sending torrents roaring and leaping down their rocky channels, which turn into peaceful streams when they reach the green valleys, and help to fill the great rivers. The rain which soaks deep down into the earth goes to fill the wells and fountains. There is not a drop of water you drink but once came down from the sky, perhaps years or hundreds of years ago, in rain, or hail, or snow. 'All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again.' (Eccles. i. 7.)

The 'river of God' feeds all living things, both plants and animals. What? *Do we eat the rain?* Think a little. You eat bread and butter, and milk, and meat. But where does the bread come from? From the corn. And if there were no rain the corn would never grow, or if it began to grow it would wither. The cow gives us milk and butter, and we eat the flesh of oxen and sheep and other creatures. But what do they eat? The grass, and turnips, and other things that grow out of the ground. And if the rain ceased, the grass and all plants and fruits of every sort would perish, and the whole face of the earth would become a bare dusty desert.

Perhaps you may remind me that in the land of Egypt, where there is no rain, the river Nile overflows the land and makes the harvest grow. True; but it is the rain which falls on the mountains far away in the south which fills the river and makes it overflow.

So, you see, all our food, as well as every draught we drink, comes to us from this wonderful river of the rain.—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 147.

### THROUGH THE CORNFIELDS

'Thou preparest them corn. —PSALM LXV. 9.

LET us see what the full ears and sheaves, silent as they are, can teach us. For wherever we go, and especially in the country, God is speaking to us through all we see and hear; the stars, the rocks, the trees, the plants, all bring a message to us from Him, if only we will open our ears and listen to it.

I. One thing we learn is that corn is God's special gift to man. You remember what He said to Adam? 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of the earth.' Geologists, that is persons who study the history of the earth, tell us that they can discover no signs that corn grew upon the earth before the time when God made man. Other plants and trees were created before man appeared, but corn was produced just in time for man—it was God's great gift to us, and was not created before man could make use of it. And something else shows God made corn especially for our use, and that is we never find wild corn. It is the gift of God. He gave it to us just as it is, and if we don't cultivate it we lose it altogether. And so the cornfields remind us how our Father in heaven gives us our daily bread.

II. But these cornfields remind us of something else that God said to Adam; after he had eaten of the forbidden fruit, God said to him, 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread'. How true that is! for what a great deal of cultivating corn requires! Some plants and trees will give us their fruit every year with very little trouble indeed—look at the grass with which God feeds the cattle. Year after year it grows just the same; and as soon as one plant dies another takes its place, and the more it is cropped by cattle the more abundantly it sends out shoots, and thus requires no fresh planting nor cultivation. How different it is with corn! Every year the farmer has to plough and harrow his fields, and every year

afresh he must sow the seeds of another harvest; it is no use leaving the old roots in the ground, for gradually they will dwindle away, and at last die out altogether. Every harvest is won by the sweat of man's brow.

III. One more lesson from the corn. God keeps His promises. When Noah and his family left the ark, after the waters of the flood had gone down, we can imagine how fearful they must have been lest another deluge might come and sweep them away. They had escaped once, but suppose another visitation came from God? And then they had escaped death in one form, but should they be able to find means of support on the earth?

What does that rainbow mean? It is a sign of God's promise that never again shall the waters of a flood sweep over the face of the earth, and that winter and summer, seed-time and harvest, shall never fail.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 162.

### MISSIONS

PSALM LXVII.

OF the prayers of David the son of Jesse, one of the best known is found in the sixty-seventh Psalm: 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations'. That prayer gives us a map of our mission-field. Will you join me in carefully examining it? It spreads itself out before my eye as a wide circle, we shall start from its centre and travel outwards to its circumference. The whole circle is made up of four circles which are different from each other, though often you can hardly tell where the one ends and the other begins, and though the four, like the circles on the map of the world, make one rounded whole. These are:—

- I. Our Heart.
- II. Our Home.
- III. Our Neighbourhood.
- IV. The World.

As this is a missionary address, I will give the most time to the last two parts of the subject.

Our starting-point, then, is the centre of this growing circle:—

I. **Our Heart.**—All true mission-work begins at home, and nothing is so near home as your own heart. Thus the mission prayer runs, 'God be merciful unto us, and bless us'. The wonderful little mission-field within you is like the great mission-field without: it may easily become a stronghold of heathenism: a great work needs to be done in it. And this work can be done, not by your own might or merit, but by God's mercy. Your first and last cry must be for mercy: 'God be merciful unto me a sinner'. They who believe and feel the mercy of God in Christ, they only can do the work of God. In midwinter ships often fail to reach the Canadian coast. The sailors are often benumbed by the intense cold, their hands and feet frostbitten, and the very



sails and ropes so frozen that they cannot be moved. In such a case they turn right round, and make for the warm gulf stream which flows through the sea in that region. On reaching it they pass at one bound from winter to spring. They bathe their frozen hands and feet in the genial waters, icicles fall upon the deck from the crackling sails, and the revived sailors receive fresh heart and hope in the strength of which they soon reach the shore. Like them, you have a difficult work before you; like them, you must be warmed into fresh life before you can do it; but unlike them, you need never leave the stream that makes you glad, for you may always keep yourself in the love of God. 'Continue ye in my love,' our Saviour says to all His people. Oh, when the wondrous mercy of God to you is believed as a reality, it enters your soul, and goes through you with the swiftness and ease of light and heat; and then you gladly begin the mission for which God has sent you into this world.

We are also to pray, 'God cause His face to shine upon us'. Words like these are often found in the Bible: what exactly do they mean? I once saw an assembly of some twelve thousand people, who had met to welcome a favourite princess. When she appeared, hearty goodwill caused thousands of faces to shine upon her. Every face shone as if brilliantly lighted up from within. The radiance of that sea of faces, a radiance all borrowed from the heart, was one of the most beautiful sights I have seen. These people loved the royal visitor before; she knew beforehand, I dare say, that they loved her; but not till that hour did she see and feel the fullness of their love. Each shining face was the mirror of a loving heart. The Christian knows that, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth him, yet his chief desire is that the love in God's heart would appear, as it were, in His face, and so conquer all his doubts, and beget love in return. Thus God's mission-work prospers in our heart of hearts, and soon spreads through—

**II. Our Home.**—Our Saviour likens the kingdom of heaven to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. The leaven is not on, but in the meal, placed in the centre of it; it spreads through and through it, and then it passes over from the leavened meal into other meal lying near it. The leaven has force to change all the meal it touches. Thus God's grace, when it is not hindered, begins in the inmost heart and works from within outwards, leavening first the life at home. Home is certainly meant, though not mentioned in our prayer. 'God bless us,' not me; it is the prayer of one who is not solitary, but planted in a family. He who prays for all men must specially embrace those who are nearest and dearest to him. God has given you a mission of your own, which He has given to no one else. It is to do what you can to make your home holy and happy. The Bible is a very homely book, for it says much about home duties. It tells you that before you can do anything else well,

'you must first learn to show piety at home'. You sometimes sing of 'home, sweet home,' but it is the folks in it, young and old, who make home sweet. If they are not sweet, home often becomes only a house less loved than the house of strangers. Often one boy or girl can make a home happy or wretched; can fill it with sunshine, or overshadow it with a cloud. Now God's grace should take away from you every bitter thing, and make you one of the best of sons or daughters, of brothers or sisters; one of God's best gifts to your family. I remember visiting a sick Sabbath-school girl, who lived with her mother in one of the humblest homes. The mother, whose sins had made her an outcast, stood by the bedside weeping. I could hardly have believed that there were so many tears in any fountain as came through her two eyes. 'Pray that God won't take away my little lassie,' she said. 'I'm sure He sent her as a good angel to me. I forgot all that was good till she began to sing her little hymns to me, and tell me what she heard at the school. I fear that if she's not with me, I will go back to my old bad ways.' God had blest that girl, and caused His face to shine upon her, so that His way and saving health were known also by her mother. His grace in her heart widened till it had filled her home also.

From our home we pass on to the larger circle of—

**III. Our Neighbourhood and our nation.**—Every Christian must have the mission spirit; for it is the very spirit of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This earth was a dark spot in God's bright universe, a sort of out-field overrun with weeds; but it is also heaven's mission-field. Some old writer has said that 'God had only one Son, and He made Him a missionary'.

You should have pitying love for all around you who have erred, and gone out of the way. But your hearts should be drawn out chiefly to the young, who have had almost no chance of doing well, who are untaught and uncared for, and who are growing up among unholy sights and sounds. The more I know of these people, the less I like a name often given to them, 'the lapsed masses'. It means the fallen masses. Now all men form a lapsed mass; for we are all the fallen sons of fallen Adam; and we should not give to the ignorant and the poor a name of dishonour which may with equal justice be given to all men. I am sure that among these neglected people there are as noble hearts as beat under purple and gold. The words of Christ are true of many of them, 'the last shall be first'. God has been doing great things among them. I believe that under the sun there are no more grand and touching facts than are met with in this great home harvest-field of the Church. Do you ask, What am I to do in it? What can I do? You can think about it. You should have a warm heart for the poor, and for all who try to do them good. You should resolve that when you are fit for it, you shall have some share in such Christ-like work. Your love should so unite

you to your fellow-countrymen, that you will feel for their sins and sorrows. You should not be selfish, but ask God to help you, that through you His saving health may be at least a little better known among your own people, and in your own nation. This is what is usually called the home-mission spirit. That is a very fine word, and sets forth plainly the sum of this address; for the work of God begins at home in the hearts of men, and is carried on around their hearths, and then spreads in their neighbourhood in ever-broadening circles, and enlarges the Christian heart to embrace.

**IV. The Whole World.**—The Christian prays that God's way and saving health may be known among all nations, and that God may be feared and praised from the rising of the sun unto his going down. He believes firmly that the ignorant heathen may be taught God's way. He also believes that God's saving health can cure all the deep-running sores of the nations, and that nothing else can. He knows, too, that it is the duty, and should be the joy of all who know the glad tidings, to publish them over the whole earth. I have now come to what we call foreign missions, but we should regard all our missions as home missions. For the whole world was the home of the Son of man, and should be the home of His Church; and in these days when men run to and fro, and our ships plough every ocean, the farthest-off nations are really more our neighbours than some corners of our own country were a hundred years ago. A gentleman once said to Dr. Skinner, who was asking aid for foreign missions, 'I don't believe in foreign missions. I won't give anything except to home missions. I want what I give to benefit my neighbours.' 'Well,' the doctor made reply, 'whom do you regard as your neighbours?' 'Why, those around me.' 'Do you mean those whose land joins yours?' 'Yes.' 'Well,' said Dr. Skinner, 'how much land do you own?' 'About five hundred acres,' was the reply. 'How far down do you own it?' inquired Dr. Skinner. 'Why, I never thought of it before, but I suppose I own half-way through.' 'Exactly,' said the doctor; 'I suppose you do, and I want this money for the Chinese—the men whose land joins yours on the bottom.' Every Christian should say in a higher sense than the poet meant, 'I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me'.

Were I asked what boys and girls should do for foreign missions, my answer would be—Read, Think, Give, Pray.—*JAMES WELLS, Bible Echoes, p. 265.*

### CARLO

#### (Two Portions)

'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver.'—*PSALM LXVIII. 13.*

**I. Though ye have Lien among the Pots.**—A few years ago a book was published by a lady, in which she made many things which are in the Bible plain, by telling what she had seen in the land where the Bible was written. Among the things made plain by

her was the verse in Psalm LXVIII.—'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold'.

In the land where the Bible was written the houses have flat roofs. People go up there in the cool evenings to sit. Sometimes they sleep there; and sometimes they cook their food there.

When the food is cooked on the roof, the fire is built in a corner; the pots and pans are kept in that corner; and, of course, there is always a heap of soot and ashes there.

Now the nights are sometimes very cold in that land, and doves like to have a warm bed to sleep in, and they are wise enough to find out and like the warm corner on the house-tops where the fires have been. And although it is not very tidy or clean there, it is warm, and they fold their wings and lie down in the ashes beside the pots and pans, and go to sleep; and very soon their beautiful wings are soiled and blackened with ashes and soot.

One morning, when this lady had been sleeping on the roof of the house where she was staying, she happened to wake very early, and as she was looking about her and at the beautiful sky, she saw some doves that had been sleeping in the fireplace waking up, rising from their bed of ashes, and shooting out and up in the morning air. And as they flew past she noticed that the morning light fell so richly on their wings that they shone like silver and gold.

Then she remembered this verse in the sixty-eighth Psalm. The very thing she was looking at had been seen hundreds of years before by the singer who first sang that Psalm. He had said to himself, just as this lady said, 'That is a picture of the change which takes place when God drops down His blessing on any humble life'. Yes, just that way shine the lives of poor mothers and mothers' children when God visits their lowly homes with the glad tidings of His love. He brings them out into the light. He covers them with the light. They become His children, and everything in them and about them is changed. They are like the doves that have been sleeping among the ashes, with wings all soiled by their humble bed among the pots, soaring into the beautiful light of the morning, until the soiled wings shine as if covered with silver, and the feathers as with yellow gold.

I once heard of a poor boy of whose life this verse is almost the very story, and to whom on two occasions it came as if sent from God Himself. He had been brought over from Savoy to sweep chimneys in London. I am afraid he was stolen and sold to do this work. It was a hard time for boys like him. They had to rise in the early morning, before the people of the city had begun to wake, and go out with a brush in their hand and a bag on their back, barefooted, winter and summer, after their masters, along the silent streets, crying, 'Chimneys to sweep—sweep—sweep!' But, far worse than that, they had to go up the chimneys, from the fireplace inside to the chimney-pot on the roof, brushing all the way.

Sometimes, in the cold mornings, perhaps only half awake, the little fellows would be afraid to go up all alone into the dark and narrow chimney; and too often when this befell they were beaten and compelled to go up. Many and many a time when I myself was a boy have I met those tiny little chaps in the street, with white channels on their black cheeks, where the tears had been running down.

I do not know that Carlo, whose story I am telling, was ever beaten by his master; but he was often spoken to very harshly. He was not very well fed. He had to sleep in a miserable bed. His clothes were very thin, and soiled, and poor; and he was as lonesome as any boy ever was in London. He knew no one. His father, if he was living still, was far away in Savoy. His mother was dead. He had never been to school: he did not even know the A B C. The only pleasure he had was playing marbles with boys as poor as himself.

There was one thing, however, in Carlo's life, poor and wretched though his lot was, which was better to him than money or fine clothes. God had put a great hunger for school learning into his heart. As he went along the streets and saw the shop-signs, he often said to himself, 'Some day I hope to be able to read these signs'.

And the day came, sooner than he hoped for, when he was to make a beginning in this learning. It was a bright day in summer. His morning's work was over; he had been to his master's place with his bag and brush; and now, with the soot rubbed off his face and shaken out of his hair, he was going some errand for his master's wife. He had to cross a large square in which there was a public school. Just then the boys had their play-hour, and it was the time for marbles. Little groups were scattered about, kneeling and bending over their game, and some of the school books had been thrown on the ground, and were being blown open by the wind.

It was the first time Carlo had seen a school book, or, except through a bookseller's window, any book. He stopped, he knelt down, he looked at what seemed to him the strange forms of the letters. And the desire came strongly into his heart that he also might have the blessing which those boys who were playing had, and one day be able to read their books. Just then, however, the boy whose book he was bending over saw the black figure near it, and came up and gave him a scolding for looking at his books. The poor Savoyard at first started up, and shrank back afraid and sorry, and was about to pass on, when a thought came into his mind in a moment, and in his broken English he spoke it out, 'I am sorry! I did not mean to soil your book; but if you will turn over the leaves and let me see to the end I will give you some marbles.' The boy went into that proposal at once and got the marbles. And then the sweep-boy said, 'I should so like to learn to read a book. I will come every day at this hour if you will teach me the letters, and I will give you a marble for every letter I learn.' This bargain also was struck, and the little

man soon began to get well on in the alphabet. But the book in which he had his lessons began also to have some marks of sooty fingers, and his boy-teacher told him that he was being scolded in the school, and could not teach him any more.

Carlo was very sad, and it was a day or two before his sadness grew less. But just then he remembered that there was a churchyard near the square, and that the headstones were covered with letters. He went back to the boy who had taught him, gave him a handful of marbles he had won that morning, and asked if he would come for five minutes every day to the cemetery and teach him from the stones. And he did. And other boys came to think it good play to help. And by and by the poor Savoyard knew letters and was able to read the smaller words on the stones.

**II. Wings of a Dove Covered with Silver.**—The story I am telling you takes us back to the time when Sunday schools began to be held in London. By some means or other Carlo found his way to a Sunday school. Here it was his good hap to have a kind teacher, a working joiner, who took an interest in him, and helped him to learn to read. And before long he could read the easy verses in the Gospels pretty well.

The teacher's son was about Carlo's own age, but was attending a public school. He was a very kind lad, and used to tell the poor Savoyard what fine doings they sometimes had at school. One Sunday he came to him in great glee, and said the school was to go in procession with other schools to St. Paul's Cathedral on Holy Thursday, and it was to be a holiday. And then he said, 'And you will come also, Carlo; it will be fine to be there'. Carlo resolved to be there. It wanted some weeks to the time, but he began to get ready for the coming joy. His master gave him liberty for that day, and the master's wife said she would see to his having a pair of shoes and a cap. And at last the day came, and Carlo was early at St. Paul's.

But it was one thing to be allowed to attend a Sunday school in a back court of the City and in a poor room, and another thing to be allowed to enter St. Paul's on Holy Thursday. Carlo's Sunday clothes were only a little better than those he wore on weekdays, and they bore marks by which anyone could see that the wearer of them was an apprentice sweep. Although he had washed his hands and face, he had to do it without soap, and they also bore some marks of his daily labours. To look at him, it must be said Carlo was anything but clean. But he did not know this. He had done the best he could to be clean, and he came up to the door through which the schools were passing in, and went forward to enter. Alas! a sharp rude blow was dealt him by the staff of one of the doorkeepers, and in an angry voice the man ordered him to stand back and let the school children in. Never before did Carlo realise how far he was from good things. He was not good enough even to enter a church. The tears started into his eyes. The day



he had so long looked forward to was to be for him a day of misery. He had not courage to make a second attempt to enter. He turned aside and sat down on one of the gravestones with a heavy and sad heart. Meanwhile the procession of children passed in; hundreds and thousands went in. And then the service began.

Just at that time there was living in London a very wonderful man, a painter of great pictures and also a poet. His name was William Blake. He must have seen the children marching into St. Paul's.

As far as I can make out by the dates of my story, it was in that very year that this painter-poet wrote his great song called 'Holy Thursday,' in which he describes the procession:—

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,  
 Came children walking two and two, in red and blue and green,  
 Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow.  
 Till into the high dome of St. Paul's they like Thames waters flow.

But poor Carlo had neither red nor blue nor green to put on. And it was one of those grey-headed beadles who so cruelly struck him with his staff. As he sat there he fairly broke down. It was like being shut out of heaven. His thoughts went away far back into a happier time in Savoy. He remembered being taken once by his mother into a building larger and grander even than St. Paul's, and no one had offered to shut him out then. But those days were gone. His mother was dead; he was a stranger and an out-cast now in a strange land.

It was rather cold where he had taken up his seat, and he went round to the sunny side of the cathedral, and sat down beneath a window where he could hear the organ play. Just inside there, as it happened, the choir was placed, and the anthem that day had been chosen from the sixty-eighth Psalm. It was only the sound he could hear when the whole choir sang. But now and again single voices took up the words, and these fell on his ear with great distinctness. And thus, to this poor child that day came to comfort him the words which have led me to tell this story, 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold'. It was as if the words had been sent to him direct from God. He could not quite understand their meaning; he only understood that they were words for such as he. It was because he had been lying among the pots that he was shut out from the church that morning. And now God was speaking to him by the words of the singer who sang that verse of the Psalm.

A new feeling took hold of him. In a dim way he felt that God would not shut him out. He waited till the service was over and the school in which his friend was had marched past, and then went home.

And it was none too soon that he went home. Everything there was in a confusion. A fire had

broken out in the City, and the master had been sent for to help to put it out. Carlo was to come after him as soon as he returned. He had taken very little food in the morning, and although he was both hungry and faint now, he had to change his clothes and hurry after his master as fast as he could. The moment he arrived his master ordered him to climb a neighbouring roof, and pour the buckets of water which would be sent up to him on that. But to that very roof, as soon as he had reached it, the wind began to bend the flames. When he took his place on the ridge the smoke and the heat were stifling. And soon it was plain that this house also would be burned. The master shouted to the boy to come down, but the crackling of the fire and the hubbub of the noise below drowned it, so that Carlo never heard. And then, as I said, he was faint with hunger and not able to decide for himself. He waited for the buckets which never came up. The master got to be busy at other parts of the fire, and forgot that the boy had not come down. And there the child sat, waiting to do the work he had been sent up to do, unable to move because he had been ordered there, the flames all the while coming nearer and nearer every moment. Should he go down? He knew he would be beaten if the water were carried up and he not there. He shouted as loud as he could for the water, but the noise of the fire drowned his voice too.

What happened after that he never could tell. Whether he fell from the top, or was carried down on the falling roof, nobody knew. A fireman found him among the wreck in an insensible state. And when he came to himself he was in a hospital.

It was a long time before he could move his limbs. Both had been broken by the fall, and he had other hurts besides. When at length the doctor said that his bones were knit, it was only to add, 'But you are not well yourself, poor boy!' He was far from well. He could not sleep at nights for pains in his breast. He was not able to take his food, and by and by it became plain to everybody who saw him that Carlo would never leave that bed alive.

Yet that was, perhaps, the happiest time of his life. The Sunday-school teacher, whose son had been so kind to him, and who had helped him to read the Bible, came to see him two or three times a week. And always he spent a part of Sunday afternoon at his bedside. He could not speak much to Carlo, but he had kind ways with him, and used to read nice verses from the Bible. The boy thought to himself, that if Jesus had been in London he would have done just as this kind visitor did. And once or twice he let out that that thought was in his mind. At one visit the poor boy's face was covered over with beads of sweat, and the teacher took his handkerchief and gently wiped the face dry. The sufferer looked up and whispered, 'Jesus would have done that too'. Another time his friend took him a basket of sponge-cake and some strawberries, and made a little feast for the two. Carlo said, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them'.

But meanwhile he was sinking fast. He had been six months in the hospital; the winter was drawing near, the nights were getting cold; but his visitor never failed to come. One Sunday he found Carlo asleep, and he sat at the bedside till he should wake up. As he sat there, he could not help watching the white pinched face on the pillow. A flush was just then touching the cheeks, and something like a smile was moving over the lips. And then the eyes opened. 'I knew it was you,' he said, 'I have been seeing you in a dream. And such a happy dream it was!' Then, between spasms of pain, almost by single syllables at a time, he told his dream.

He was in the presence of a great church, greater than St. Paul's, as great and beautiful as the church his mother took him to when a child. It was summer time; the birds were singing; the grass was white with flowers. As he stood there, troops of children began to arrive and to pass into the church. They were dressed in the most lovely dresses he had ever seen, and were smiling and singing as they went past. He also wished to enter, but remembered that he was covered with sooty clothes. But a strange thing happened. He seemed to see himself, all black and griny, going up timidly to the door and pleading to get in. And he noticed, as the black-robed child stood there, that the great doors of the church were thrown open, and an angel came out and touched him. He saw the blackness passing away. He saw the angel covering the boy with a white and shining robe. He saw him taking the boy by the hand and leading him in. And just at that moment he heard sung by a single voice in the choir, as he had heard six months before, but more sweetly, the words, 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold'. 'But, dear teacher, the great sight was this, I thought that angel was just like you.'

That was the last visit the teacher had to make to his poor scholar. Carlo died next day, and I am sure he went to that very Saviour whom he had learned to know, partly from reading about Him in the Gospel and partly from seeing Him—or thinking he saw Him—in the face and words and acts of his gentle teacher.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 75.

## BRINGING GIFTS TO JESUS

(*Epiphany*)

'The kings of Tharsis and of the isles shall give presents: the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.'—PSALM LXXII. 10.

THE original reference in this verse, and, indeed, throughout the whole Psalm from which it is taken, is to the peaceful and glorious reign of King Solomon. In answer to his earnest prayer, God had bestowed upon him 'an understanding heart, to judge his people'; and his subjects were the better and happier for it. The mild and judicious administration of the prince was refreshing and salutary as the rain on the tender grass. Righteousness prevailed throughout

his widespread dominions. Distant realms submitted themselves to his beneficent rule. As was foretold in the words of the text, 'The kings of Tharsis and of the isles' gave 'presents: the kings of Arabia and Saba' brought 'gifts' (see I Kings x. 22, etc.).

The learned are not agreed where this Tharsis was, but there is strong ground for the opinion that it was the same as Tartessus in Spain, which was situated not far from the Straits of Gibraltar, and near the site of the famous city of Granada, of later times.

Be this as it may, once in three years the ships of Tharsis reached the seaport nearest to the court of King Solomon, bringing a goodly freight of gold, and silver, and other precious things.

The Queen of Sheba also came from far, to hear the wisdom of this wonderful monarch, and to see his glory. You remember that our blessed Saviour makes mention of her (Matt. xii. 42). The Psalm from which I have chosen the text has a much deeper meaning than this. It refers to a King greater and mightier than Solomon—even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jewish writers taught that the text, and the verses connected with it, chiefly allude to the glories of the reign of the Messiah; and the early Christian Fathers said the same. Indeed our Lord makes Solomon a type of Himself, in His remarkable declaration, 'Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!' (Luke xi. 31). The prediction in the text was fulfilled in the case of our blessed Lord, when, on the Epiphany, the day when Christ Jesus was manifested to the Gentiles, wise men came from the Eastern lands to Jerusalem, seeking for the newborn King (Matt. ii). In Persia (where it is thought that these wise men lived) their attention was attracted by a star unlike the other heavenly bodies; and God taught them, in some way, that it betokened the coming of the great Deliverer.

The prophecy of Balaam concerning the 'Star' which should 'arise out of Jacob,' had, very likely, been familiar to them, and prepared them to understand the import of the unusual sign in the heavens.

It is worth noting here, that in the Book of Revelation Jesus calls Himself the 'bright and morning Star' (xxii. 16). The wide, open plains where the wise men of the East watched their flocks, were most favourable places for the study of astronomy, and the map of the blue vault above, which they had rudely sketched, had been a sort of Bible for them. They had given good heed to what this had taught them, and God guided them to the truth.

One thing which strikes us very forcibly in these Persian wise men is their *faith*. While they were watching the star, it began to move slowly onward, and as it went they followed it. The three kings (as they are generally called) made haste to mount their camels, and, each with his casket of precious gifts, set off to pay homage to the new monarch whose birth was so signally honoured.

The journey was long and wearisome, but nothing was allowed to stop them or turn them back. It is said, by tradition, that they travelled for twelve suc-

cessive days, led onward by the marvellous light in the heavens. At last the star stood still over the gates of Bethlehem, in the land of the children of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife.

The wise men had journeyed far in faith and hope, and now they had their reward. When they had gone into the humble habitation indicated by the star, they saw the young child, with Mary His mother; and, believing Him to be the Holy One, the true Light of the world, they fell down and worshipped Him as God.

The text had foretold that they should offer their precious gifts; and so they did. 'When they had opened their treasures,' says St. Matthew, 'they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.'

The *gold* was an acknowledgment of the royalty of the Holy Child; the *frankincense*, of His divine character; and the *myrrh*, of His sufferings and death.

One saw a very curious sight in the grand old Cathedral of Cologne. In a conspicuous place there, visitors are shown what is called 'the Shrine of the Magi, or Three Kings of Orient,' beneath which their bones are said to be buried. The skulls of the wise men, inscribed with their names (Gaspar, Melchior, Balthazar) written in rubies, are exhibited through an opening in the shrine.

I merely mention this as a curious sight. Of course, I do not believe that the bodies or the skulls of the wise men are in Cologne. As far as that goes, it matters little to them or to us where they are.

Do you envy these wise men the privilege of beholding the infant Saviour? Do you say it would afford you great satisfaction to worship Him, and to present to Him precious gifts? You need not envy them, nor complain that you cannot do what they did. God allows the same privilege to every one of us.

The King Himself comes near  
To feast His saints to-day;  
Here may we sit and see Him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray.

Are we telling an untruth when we say this? And then—as to *offerings*—we not only *may* bring them to Jesus, but we *must*. He expects all of His people, old and young, to do it.

When we perform kind acts for the poor, the Lord Jesus considers it just the same as if we had done them for Himself.

He is pleased with these sacrifices which we make for His sake; but never does He look with more favour on us, than when we give up ourselves to His service.

The mite my willing hands can give,  
At Jesus's feet I lay;  
Grace shall the humble gift receive:  
Abounding grace repay.

When the wise men came to Bethlehem, they did not kneel to Joseph, nor the manger, nor even to the Blessed Virgin, but it was the Holy Child Jesus whom

they fell down and worshipped. He alone should be the object of our devotion, and of our highest love.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 37.

### THE HANDFUL OF CORN ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS

'There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains.'—PSALM LXXII 16.

I. Let us Think of Where the Corn comes from.—It does not come like anything else in the world. In the woods you may sometimes find a tree growing with a little round black fruit, hard and sour. It does not seem to be worth much by the side of the luscious plum from the garden. But that *slœ*, as it is called, is the plum in its wild state. The gardener takes it, and trains it, and cultivates it until it comes to be a larger and finer tree. So it is with the crab-tree and its little bitter fruit—that is the wild apple. And so with the strawberry, and all the fruits and plants in our gardens. They were found in a wild state, and they had to be cared for and cultivated before they were worth anything. But nobody ever found corn growing wild. Unlike everything else, corn is the special and peculiar gift of God, which He put into man's hand just as it is. You remember that when Adam was in the Garden of Eden, he had to dress it and to keep it. All grew of itself and he had only to prune it and to keep it in order. But when he was driven forth from the garden, he had to 'eat bread'. And that was to grow, not of itself but only by hard work. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'—this was the new commandment. So God gave to him 'the handful of corn,' unlike everything else.

Now, if you will think for a moment, you will see how much this is like Jesus. He came a Man amongst men, and yet He is separate from us, and unlike us all. He is the special gift of God to a perishing world. All the good and wise men amongst us have been evil. They were born in sin, and their hearts, like ours, were prone to be wild and evil. The Husbandman has had to watch over them and care for them, and He has brought them into gentleness and goodness and wisdom. But Jesus was born without sin. We could never have found such an one as Jesus amongst us. He is the gift of God, the Bread of Life sent down from heaven. And it is pleasant to remember that Jesus was given to us in Bethlehem—that means, you know, 'the House of Bread'. Away on the Judean hills then, in the House of Bread, God gave to us 'the handful of corn'.

II. Then think of another wonderful thing about the corn, it will Grow all Over the World.—You learn of different things that grow in different countries—sugar in the West Indies and tea in China, and spices and many kinds of trees in other places. I have heard that once, when a certain ship came into an Australian harbour, all the people flocked down to it, and everybody was eager to buy, even at a fabulous price, the treasure that it carried on board. What do you think the treasure was? Why, nothing



but a little daisy—a common daisy. And to these people far away it seemed like a little bit of home come to them when they saw a daisy again. Though it was common enough here, there it did not grow. But corn grows all over the world. No emigrant ever goes to a place where he cannot sow corn and reap a harvest. In the tropics, where the sun beats down upon them with a sweltering heat, corn will grow. Up in the Arctic regions, where the people wrap themselves in skins of wild beasts, and have little else but whales and seals, they can grow corn. Wherever man can live, corn can grow. And is not that like our blessed Jesus? He says to us, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'. No home but may have Him in it; no heart but Jesus will dwell there; no land under heaven but there men may find the Bread of Life. In wild woods, amongst eternal snows, in the heat of the desert, out on the seas, in the islands, on the lonely top of the mountains—everywhere men may find Jesus. He is 'the Bread of Life' of which all the world may eat.

III. And let us think again of **What the Corn is Worth**.—A very little thing to talk about, this—'a handful of corn!'—to leave off singing about gold and kings and costly presents, to speak about a little thing like this! It seems very strange at first. But, you know, corn is worth more than gold and all this splendour. Everybody wants bread. The queen cannot do without it, and the poor beggar must have his crust. Everybody wants it. The Book says, 'milk' for 'babes,' and 'strong meat' for men; but little folks and old men both need bread. And this, too, is like Jesus. *We all need Him*. Children and old folk, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor—none can do without Jesus. And we need Him more than everything. The king in his palace needs Him more than all that he has. There are times when his crown can't help him, and all his wise men are of no avail, and all his wealth and splendour can do nothing for him; but if he has found Jesus, he has more than all the world. So we need not wonder that the Psalmist sang of 'a handful of corn'.

IV. And there is another reason why the Psalmist chooses it to sing about, **Because it has Life in it**.—The man who has dug for gold comes to change his gold for bread, and the man who has found a diamond sells his diamond to buy bread. And gold and diamonds belong to Him who sowed the 'handful of corn'.

And so Jesus is like the handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; the prophet tells us that we 'esteemed Him not,' and 'hid as it were our faces from Him'; there was no appearance of greatness in Him, or of power. *But in Him is life*. He comes into our hearts, and we are made like Him, and from us others catch a grain of the good seed, and the life spreads from heart to heart and from soul to soul, until 'the whole earth shall be filled with His glory'.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 67.

## HOW JESUS BLESSES MEN

'Men shall be blessed in Him.'—PSALM LXXII, 17.

EVERYBODY in the world receives some blessing from Jesus. The blessings He obtained for us are so numerous that even the poor heathen, who have never heard of His name, have received some of His blessings. But I wish to speak of what Jesus does for His own people,—for those who love and serve Him—to make them blessed. I will mention *three things* which Jesus does to bless them.

The *first* thing He does for them is to **Make them Wise**.—It is a great thing to be wise. People may be wise in many different ways. Some men are wise to make money, and others are wise to get honour. Some men are wise to build houses, and others are wise to build ships. Some are wise to cure diseases, and others are wise to make interesting books, or to invent curious machines that no one else ever thought of. Some are wise as generals to win battles, and others are wise as rulers to govern nations. Some are wise to do good, and others are wise to do evil. But I do not mean any of these ways when I speak of Jesus making people wise. The way in which He blesses people is by making them wise to serve God—wise to save their souls—wise to get to heaven. This is the only true wisdom. The Bible says this 'wisdom is the *principal* thing'; 'it is more precious than rubies'; and 'he that findeth this wisdom is happy or blessed'.

The *second* way in which He blesses them, is by **Making them Strong**.

I said a little while ago that there are different ways of being wise, and so now I may say there are different ways of being strong. Sometimes people are strong *in body*. Samson was strong in this way. What wonderful power he had! He could take hold of a lion and tear its jaws asunder with his own hands. He could pull up the huge gates of a city with the posts and bars, and carry them all away on his shoulders. He could kill a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass. He could take hold of the pillars of a great temple, and bend them like young twigs, and tumble the whole building down just as easily as a child can knock down a house of cards.

Some people are strong in *mind*. They can do a wonderful deal of thinking with great ease. Napoleon Bonaparte was so strong in mind, was such a great thinker that he could keep six persons writing, and could think for them all just as fast as they could write.

And then some persons are strong in *soul*. I mean by this that they have power or strength to do what is right, and to resist what is wrong. This is the strength that Jesus gives to His people. I do not mean to say that He doesn't give the other kinds of strength too, for all the strength of any kind that people have comes from Him. But I mean that strength of soul is the best kind of strength, and Jesus blesses His people by giving them this. And this strength is very important, because there is so

much wickedness in the world that unless we are made strong in this way we cannot keep from sinning. Without this strength we shall be just like wax in the hands of bad people, and they will twist us into any shape they please. How much of strength Daniel had when he wouldn't stop praying, even though the king threatened to put him into the den of lions! And how much of this strength Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had, when they would rather be thrown into the fiery furnace than worship the idol of the king of Babylon! A soul without strength is like a body without a back-bone. The back-bone runs through the body like a pillar or column, and supports it. If we had no back-bones, our bodies would fall all in a heap like an empty bag. We couldn't stand, or walk, or work without them; but with them we can stand, and lift, and do what we please. It is a good thing to have a strong body, but it is a great deal better to have a strong soul.

'Mother,' said a little boy as he came home from school one day, 'I'm sure you would like Tom Ashton, in our school.'

'Why so, Willie?' asked his mother.

'Because, when the boys want him to play truant, or swear, or tell lies, or do anything that is wrong, he gives them such a strong No!'

Tom Ashton had back-bone in his soul. Jesus had him strong. It is a great blessing to be able to give 'a strong no' when we are tempted to do wrong.

III. The *third* way in which Jesus blesses His people, is by **Making them Good.**

If we want to be *good inside*, we must get our hearts changed. And Jesus only can do this. He says in the Bible, 'A new heart will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them'. When Jesus undertakes to make people good, He always begins with the heart. When that is made good, then we are good inside. If you can make a fountain pure, then you may be very sure that the streams which flow out from it will be pure also.

Some time ago I went to the docks to see one of the great ships lying there. The friend who was showing me about asked me if I knew where they first went to work in building a ship. I said, No. 'Well,' says he, 'the first piece of timber that is laid is the middle of the keel, and all the rest is built upon that.' Now, the centre of the keel is the very middle of the ship. 'Ah!' I thought to myself when I heard this, 'that is just what Jesus does when He is going to build a Christian. He begins at the heart. He makes that good first, and then, by degrees, He makes all the rest good too. He makes His people "good inside" first, and then He makes them good outside afterwards.'

'Men shall be blessed in Him.'—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 49.

#### OPEN SECRETS

'Dark sayings.'—PSALM LXXVIII. 2.

THis is a curious expression. Did you ever see 'a saying'? I never did. I have heard a good many

sayings in my time but I never saw one. Perhaps it was there all the time and I could not see it because I was searching for it like the nigger boy looking for a black cat in a dark cellar without a light! But, after all, I don't think that could be the reason. You cannot see a 'say' as you can see a saw; we must seek for the meaning in another direction.

There is a statue of Shakespeare set up in Leicester Square, and this quotation is carved upon it: 'There is no darkness but ignorance'. That is true. God is perfectly wise, and therefore there is nothing hidden from Him; He is perfectly wise, and so understands all things. A 'dark saying,' then, just means something we cannot make out. But the fault may not be in the saying—the fault may be in us; we haven't brought the light with us.

There is a name we have for these dark sayings; we call them *riddles*. How dark a riddle is at first! You can't see through it. But when you do discover it at last, what do you say? Isn't it this?—'Ah! I see it now!' And then how foolish you feel—foolish to think how long you had been in seeing what, after all, was so plain! The riddle was a riddle till you brought the key; but the key had been in your own head all the time if you could only have got at it quicker.

But there is another name we sometimes give to these dark sayings. We call them *secrets*. Do you know the difference between a riddle and a secret? It is the difference between finding and exploring. When you discover a riddle you discover it all at once—there is a flash, as it were, an idea, and you have got it. But it is different with a secret. You have to dig for that as men dig for gold and silver, and when you have got it, it doesn't look like gold or silver, but like copper or iron; you have to learn how to melt it and get it out. Or you have to master it as men master the Greek and the Hebrew—by learning a little bit, and a little bit more every day; understanding a little bit, and a little bit more every day. The work has to go on inside yourself before you can come to read quite plainly what had been such a strange, mysterious secret to you before. And then, most likely, after years and years of hard study you laugh quietly to yourself, and say, 'Where is the secret? There is none! It is all plain and open to me; I wonder how I ever could have thought there was any mystery about it.' Yes, it was your ignorance that made the darkness; the darkness was in you and not in the sayings.

It is the same with everything. God has to teach us. It is dark or quite plain just as we bring or do not bring the right light to it. He has not hidden anything from us; things are hidden from us just as the Hebrew or Greek may be hidden from us. We may see the letters but yet not understand their meaning, because we haven't tried to train ourselves for it.

Do you remember how, when David was in danger, his friend Jonathan gave him a warning? Jonathan was watched, and therefore could not go and speak to

David, but he had agreed about a signal to give him. So Jonathan went out into the field and began to shoot arrows. If you had seen him then you would simply have thought he was amusing himself. But David from his hiding-place was watching, and by the way the arrows went he learnt that Saul was seeking for his life. He was in the secret, and Jonathan was in the secret, but to everybody else it was only an idle game. Yet there was such a deep meaning in it all.

And that is how it is with all that is around us. God has a meaning in everything. He is trying to signal to us through everything; but we can get at His meaning only as we have been let into His secret. It is a secret, and yet it is not a secret; it is quite plain, and yet there is only one who can understand it. Who is that? It is the boy or the girl, the man or the woman, who fears God. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.' To fear Him doesn't mean to be afraid of Him. It is quite the other way; it means to love Him, to trust Him, to keep on thinking about Him, to lift the heart to Him in everything—to remember God in all our ways. As we do that we are learning *God* as we would learn a language. The Bible, the world, our own hearts, Jesus, everything becomes clearer and simpler, and easier to understand; the darkness goes as we bring more light, but the light must come from our own hearts. It is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom—a wisdom that is more than knowledge and better than knowledge—the wisdom that cometh down from above.

Keep your hearts always towards God. Be reverent in everything about Him; be humble, willing to learn; above all, be trustful. The teacher cannot teach anything unless the child believes what he says, and God cannot teach us or 'enlighten' us unless we do the same.

How do you see the sun? It is because the sun is shining; the sun gives the light by which you see the light. And just so it is only God who can show us God. Then begin with Him, continue with Him, end with Him about everything, and His darkest sayings will become very, very bright, and their brightness will make up the eternal daytime of your soul.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 202.

### 'I AM HOLY'

'Preserve my soul; for I am holy.'—PSALM LXXXVI. 2.

I. The Meaning.—'What presumption!' But 'holy' has two meanings:—

1. It means 'very good'.

So *God* is Holy. *Jesus* is Holy (Acts iv. 27). The *angels* are Holy. [Clergyman once asked little Irish boy, 'What does holy mean?' 'Plase, your reverence, to be clane inside!'] But—

2. It means *consecrated, set apart*.

[*Illustrate*: The church is a *holy* building; the churchyard, a *holy* place; Sunday, a *holy* day. In each case explain why. So men may be set apart—

priests in the temple—clergymen, etc.]. If David wrote this psalm, then a good reason for saying he was holy. Picture out his consecration from 1 Samuel xvi.

In this second meaning, not *presumption* but *faith* to say, 'I am holy'. [If sheep could speak, might say to shepherd, 'I have your mark upon me, therefore take care of me'.]

II. The Application.—We are not very good—could not ask God to save us, because in this sense we are Holy; but in the other sense:—

1. Our consecration. [Picture out a baptism—small baby. What is done to it? What said? 'Christ's faithful soldier and servant'. So set apart—has the mark put on it—made holy.]

2. Remember you have been set apart—you have got the Good Shepherd's *mark* on you. Therefore you may ask for help and say, 'Preserve me; for I am holy'.

(i) Sometimes in trouble—cf. Psalmist—the great helper. But *why* should He help me? I am Holy—marked with His mark—therefore He must help if I ask Him.

(ii) When tempted—hard to resist temptation—but 'not our own'—belong to some one else—ask Him.

One of these days, if we trust Him to whose service we have been set apart, He will bring us through all dangers and temptations safe to live in His own home. Then we shall indeed be *Holy* in the very best and most perfect sense.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 51.

### THE BLESSINGS BROUGHT TO US BY THE GOSPEL

'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.'—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

It is a blessed thing to hear the joyful sound of the Gospel, *because of the benefits which it brings to us*.

I. The first of these benefits of which I would speak is *Knowledge*.—In the last chapter I said that the first of the evils from which the Gospel saves us is *ignorance*. And now, in talking about the benefits which the Gospel brings us, it is proper to begin by speaking of the wonderful knowledge which it gives us. Knowledge is like light. It helps us to see things clearly, and to understand all about them; but if we were left without knowledge, these things would seem to us just as if they were in the dark.

II. The second benefit which the Gospel brings to those who hear its joyful sound is *Pardon*. The greatest evil under which anybody in the world ever suffered is sin. And the greatest blessing or benefit anybody can receive is to get rid of sin. To get rid of sin is to have it pardoned. The pardon of sin is a blessing worth more than all the gold and silver in the world put together. But perhaps some of you may be ready to ask, Well, if the pardon of sin is really such a very great blessing, why do not people try more to get it? This is a very proper question to ask just here. The answer to it is this:



People do not value the pardon which Jesus brings, because they do not see and feel what a dreadful evil sin is. If they could only see this in its proper light as God sees it, they would never rest, and never have any peace or comfort till they were sure of a pardon.

Some years ago there was a rich man in India who was troubled about his sins, and wished to get them pardoned. The priest told him that in order to secure this it was necessary for him to make a *rolling* journey, to a particular temple, in a distant part of India. When he arrived there he was to set out a plantain tree and wait till the fruit was ripe, make an offering of the fruit to his god, and then *roll back* again, and then he might hope that his sins would be pardoned. He resolved to do it. So he took his wife and children in a carriage that they might ride while he was rolling. He used to wrap a strong cloth round his head to protect it from being cut or bruised. Then he would roll himself along the road like a log of wood. Three or four miles a day was as much as he could proceed. Then he would rest with his family and start afresh the next day. His son would walk by him and fan him as he rolled along. When he was approaching a village the people would come out in crowds to meet him, and the musicians would walk before him to the temple in that village. He would roll up to the foot of the idol and worship him. Then he would spend a few days to rest, and so go rolling on in his long journey. An English missionary met this man when he was still a long way from the temple to which he was going. He had then been *more than seven years* on his journey. Yet he was willing to go rolling on till he reached the temple, and then to roll all the way back again, with the mere hope that at last he might perhaps succeed in getting a pardon for his sins.

But the Bible tells us that 'Jesus is exalted to God's right hand, to *give* pardon'. The pardon that He gives is free. He asks nothing for it. He gives it 'without money and without price'. It is a *full* pardon. It takes away *all* our sins and blots them out entirely, so that God has nothing against us, and we have nothing to fear, either while we live or when we die, either in this world or in the world to come. What a blessed thing it is then to hear the joyful sound of the Gospel! It is blessed because of the benefits which it brings. The second of these benefits is *Pardon*.

III. We shall only speak of one more of the benefits which the Gospel brings, and this is *Help*.—There is nothing in the world that needs help more than a little infant. It is one of the most helpless of all things. The little duck can plunge into the water and swim as soon as it comes out of the shell. The little chicken, too, can run about at once and pick up its food. But the little infant can't do anything. It can't feed itself. It can't dress itself. It can't stand or walk by itself. It needs help for everything. And when we first begin to serve God, or when we become Christians, the Bible compares it to our being born again. Then we are *spiritual infants*. It is

the babyhood of our souls then. And we need help for our souls then, just as we do for our bodies when they are in their babyhood. We need the help of Jesus for everything we try to do. This was what Jesus meant when He said, 'Without Me ye can do nothing'.

When we read about the martyrs who were tortured and burnt and put to cruel deaths because they would not deny their Saviour, we often wonder to ourselves how it was that they could be so cheerful and happy even while their bodies were burning in the fire. If we just put our finger in the fire for a moment, we know very well how badly it pains us. Then how dreadful it must have been to be burnt to death! Yet some of the martyrs went to meet this fearful death as pleasantly as if they had been going to a feast. Sometimes they would hold out their hands in the flames, and sing praises to God while they were burning. How could they do it? *God helped them*.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 21.

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE GOSPEL

'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound.'—PSALM LXXXIX. 15.

I. THE *first* evil from which the Bible saves us is *Ignorance*.—Ignorance is to our minds just what darkness is to our bodies. It prevents us from seeing the things around us. When the sun is shining brightly, how pleasant it is to look out on a beautiful landscape! We can see the green fields and the waving grain—the trees, the hills, the streams, and everything. But suppose the sun should suddenly be taken away. Could we see anything then? No. All would be dark around us. We could see nothing. Now the Bible is like a sun to us. It sheds light on a great many things. If it were not for the Bible, we should be left in the dark on all these things. The Bible drives away this darkness. It saves us from ignorance. But we are so accustomed to the Bible, and the blessed light which shines from it, that we hardly know how to prize it enough, or what our condition would be if we had never had it. If we want to know what a blessed thing it is to hear its joyful sound, we must look at the ignorance of some of the people who have never had the Bible.

Sometimes when the missionaries of the Gospel go to the heathen to teach them about Jesus and His religion, they have to begin first to teach them the English language, because many of the languages of the heathen have no words to express some of the most important things of which the missionaries wish to speak. Some of those languages have no word to stand for the 'soul,' or 'life,' or 'home,' or 'mercy,' or 'heaven,' or 'eternity'. Now, suppose we lived among a people who knew nothing about 'home—sweet home'. That is, suppose none of us had any home. Suppose that we did not know that there was such a thing as *mercy*, or such a place as heaven. Suppose that we did not know that we had a *soul*, and that we are to live after death, how sad our state

would be! We would be in the dark indeed! How dreadful such ignorance would be! And yet, if it were not for the Bible, we should be ignorant about these things, or left in the dark about them.

But, 'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound'. It is a blessed thing to have the Bible, because of the evils from which it saves us. The first of these evils is Ignorance.

II. The *second* of these evils is **Oppression**.—I suppose you all know what oppression means. For instance: here is a little boy going out into the fields to fly a kite which he has just made. A big boy meets him and threatens to beat him unless he gives him the kite. There is no one near to help the little boy. He is obliged to give up his kite, and let the big boy take it. That would be oppression. You might well say that that big boy was oppressing the little boy. And wherever anything like this is done by one man towards another, *that* is oppression.

III. The *third* evil from which the Bible saves us is **Cruelty**.—Wherever the Bible is not known cruelty prevails, in many forms. We read in the Bible that 'the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty'. These dark places mean heathen lands. Wherever you go in heathen lands you meet with cruelty in one form or other. I know that this is not a pleasant subject to dwell upon. But we cannot tell how much we owe to the Bible, or what a blessed thing it is to hear this joyful sound, unless we do, in this way, look at the dreadful evils from which we are saved by having the Bible. And one of the worst of these evils is the cruelty which prevails in lands where the Bible is not known.

One of these forms of cruelty is *the offering of human sacrifices*.

Not long since there was war on the west coast of Africa. One of the tribes, before going to battle, resolved to offer a sacrifice to their god, in order to secure success. They selected a little boy, about eight years old, as their victim. They dressed him in the finest clothes they had. They decorated his fingers and toes with gold rings, and hung around his neck *greegrees*, or charms. They then placed him in a deep hole, with his head just above the ground. The poor little fellow cried and screamed, but nobody heeded him. A great crowd of men and women stood round, and watched what was done. They filled up the hole with earth and stones. They piled it up over his head till a great mound was raised above him, and then they left him, in his living grave, to die a miserable death. All through Africa such dreadful sacrifices are offered from time to time.

And so we might go on to speak of cannibalism, or the eating of human flesh, and a great many other forms of cruelty which are found in heathen lands; but from all these evils we are delivered, because we are blessed in hearing the joyful sound of the Gospel. Cruelty is the third evil from which the Bible saves us.

IV. The *fourth* and last evil of which I would speak, from which the Bible saves us, is **Idolatry**.—

'Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound' of the Gospel. It is a blessed thing to hear this sound, because of the evils from which it saves us.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 9.

## OUR SECRET SINS

PSALM XC. 8.

EVERY man has his secret sins, and nearly half his life is spent in endeavouring to hide them. How many of our most candid, open-minded and above-board young people would tell all their thoughts, even to their best friends? There is scarcely a person among our acquaintances who does not hide thoughts of such unworthy character that if he knew it were possible for anyone to discover them, he would rather make the biggest sacrifice and break the closest and most loving ties than endure the shame which would be heaped upon him as their author. That is the reason why so many people hope they will be dead and gone before the X-rays will be applied to the mind and the spirit as they are now being applied to the body.

One great deficiency in modern preaching is the very slight emphasis laid upon sin, especially the sin of the heart and mind. The result is that the majority of people take for granted that sin is not really sin until it is expressed in some deed or act. A greater mistake is hardly possible. Sins of thought hurt as long as they are hid, and cease hurting only when they are acknowledged, like the fox beneath the Spartan boy's robe that gnawed his flesh when it was covered up and stopped biting when it was revealed.

It is a fact which cannot be too deeply impressed upon the human mind that God *sees the thought* long before it becomes an act. 'Human law and human power take no cognisance until the pot of passion boils over, but God sees the ingredients in the cauldron, seething, bubbling, and kept for years from boiling over by fear of public exposure and censure.' Take murder for example. The world only sees it in the spilt blood and the ghastly mangled corpse of the victim, but God sees the seed of it growing in the heart—He observes the poisonous ingredients developing and ripening before the deed is done. 'Whosoever hateth his brother' is a murderer. So with adultery. The world only sees the loathsome scandal as it gloats over it in the columns of the daily papers, but God sees the poison in the heart.

In like manner, covered sin becomes a rotten hollow in a human soul, and when the strain comes the false gives way and the crash follows. Among such sins we mention—

I. **Covetousness**.—The covetousness we are warned against in the 'old book' is the overstrung desire for more, a desire uncontrolled by reason or conscience, or the fear of God. A desire that is willing to gain for itself at the expense of others, and at the expense also of higher and better things. It is not coveting to desire a berth in a large and respectable firm, but

to desire it at the expense of doing a mean shabby thing to get the present occupant out of it is covetousness of the most satanic type. To desire pleasure is natural to every man. He is made to enjoy it. But to desire it so vehemently as to whine and vex when the desire cannot be gratified is a very mean form of covetousness. There is even a worse form—that manifested by a professing Christian who pretends that he hates certain forms of pleasure because they are sinful and yet longs to enjoy them.

Every sin ever committed was born of desire. If we could only succeed in uprooting and crushing this sin there would be no other sin. That is why we have mentioned it first in the list. The whole history of the world is stained and darkened by the crimes to which men have been driven by this insidious secret sin. Take heed unto your aims and ambitions, and plans and desires. Be manly and independent in them all. Have nothing to enjoy but what you earn. Scorn every luxury but what you have a Divine right to enjoy, spurn every thought which leads you to desire what is not your own, and by doing this you will kill in the germ one of the deadliest secret sins of the soul. Another secret sin is—

**II. Pride.**—When man thinks best of himself it is then as a rule God and others think worst of him. This fact makes it very difficult for us to make the lesson, in regard to pride, sharp and pointed enough to be driven home.

That pride is one of the most far-reaching and deadly of the secret sins is a fact of which a mere glance at its history will convince us. 'It thrust Adam out of Paradise, Saul out of his kingdom, Haman out of his court, Nebuchadnezzar out of men's society, and Lucifer out of heaven.'

It is not only deadly and far-reaching, but it is so subtle that Satan can often make a man proud *he is not proud*.

Another secret sin is—

**III. Selfishness.**—This sin has been defined as 'that detestable thing which no one forgives in others and no one is free from himself'. Archbishop Whately, while preaching upon it, once asked: 'Do you want to know the man against whom you have most reason to guard yourself? If so, your looking glass will give you a very fair likeness of his face.' The reason why there is so much self-satisfaction manifested among our young people in the present day is that there is so little self-examination.

The grandest cure for selfishness is an intelligent look into the face of Jesus Christ—whose motto in all He is, does, gives, is 'for others'. Every pain He endured on earth had on it inscribed 'for others'. Every drop of blood He shed had on it 'for others'. Every pang which rent His heart on the cross was endured 'for others'. Every thorn in the crown which pierced His aching head, every nail driven through His lacerated, quivering flesh, said, as it did its work, 'for others'. When He entered the grave He did it 'for others'. When He rose triumphantly

on the third day it was 'for others'. All He did in life—all He accomplished through death—was and is 'for others'. Therefore, uproot this secret sin from your heart; make *Him* your standard, and

In good and ill leave castuists on the shelf,  
He never errs who sacrifices self.

—H. ELWYN THOMAS, *Pulpit Talks to Young People*, p. 94.

## THE PATIENCE OF MARGARET HOPE

PSALM XCI.

WHEN cholera came the second time to this country, a poor young lass in a Scottish village was beginning to learn the greatness of God's love for His people. But there was one thing she saw caused her to fall into great trouble of soul. She saw that the terrible sickness made no difference between the good and the bad. It even sometimes passed the doors of people notorious for their evil lives and entered those of the best-living servants of God.

She would not have been surprised if any night the sickness had come to herself. She had not yet learned to think of herself as one whom Jesus loved. What troubled her was that the sickness fell on homes which she had all her days looked upon as protected by His love.

Her trouble took its rise in the ninety-first Psalm, the Psalm which the tempter quoted when he wanted the Saviour to cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple. In that Psalm, when a little girl at school, she had learnt by heart these words:—

No plague shall near thy dwelling come,  
No ill shall thee befall;  
For thee to keep in all thy ways  
His angels charge He shall.

And through all the years which had gone over her since, she had believed that these words were a promise which the faithful Saviour would be sure to fulfil. Yet now a time had come to her native village in which fulfilment of this promise might be looked for; and there was no fulfilment of it.

She said to her soul: 'Soul, has God forgotten His promise? Or, are those on whom the plague has fallen not His people? Or, are the words mere words and no promise? Or, is it I who am ignorant and have not yet learned what they mean?' The reason her soul replied: 'Margaret, Margaret Hope, art thou not as yet a mere child in the Scriptures; and dost thou dare to ask of its words, if they are mere words and no promise?'

At that a great silence fell upon Margaret's soul. And she took up her Bible and the Psalm which had plunged her into trouble, and began to read, and think, and pray, and to sit like a child at the feet of God, until He should be pleased to give her the right understanding of the words.

For fourteen days, almost day and night, taking little sleep, eating little food, her soul sat in this silence, in this search for God's meaning, at the feet of God. Do not smile at her, you who have had



parents or teachers to tell you the meaning as you read : you who see the meaning all clear. She had no parent, no teacher, no help from man. She was in darkness and had to work her own way through the darkness to the truth. But she bent herself with all her young strength and heart to find the truth. Verse by verse, word by word, poring over each, praying over each, she read. It seemed so plain, so clear : 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling,' that she was sometimes in despair of ever seeing anything else in the words. Then she would read the Psalm from beginning to end ; then she would compare it with other Psalms and other passages of Scripture. And still no light came to her. There was the promise—clear as a sunbeam : 'Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling' ; and there, outside, at that very moment, was a real plague wrapping the dwellings of God's people round and round with the fog of death.

At length, however, light began to dawn upon her, but in a strange, unlooked-for way. An assurance fell upon her soul and spread gently over it, that although she might never come to see the real meaning, the words were God's ; and, in His good time, if not here in this world, then in the next, He would make their meaning plain to her. And she was thanking God for this, and was about to close the Bible for the night and rest in what she had come to, when her eye caught the first words of the previous Psalm—the ninetieth—and in a moment the whole rich meaning of the ninety-first flashed into her soul and through and through her like a sudden burst of morning light. 'Lord, Thou hast been a dwelling-place in all generations.' Thou ! God Himself. This—not the house in the city, or the village, but God Himself—was the dwelling which no plague could enter, which no evil could touch. The great dark wall of her ignorance fell down. The Psalm which troubled her was a Psalm which set forth God as the dwelling-place and habitation of His people. And the promise was to those who made Him their habitation. A great joy took hold of her, and a new deep trust in God. She was like one whom an angel has lifted nearer heaven. She felt that God was, indeed, a dwelling-place for His people ; and even, although at first in a timid way, that He would be a dwelling-place for her. Then, like a child to its mother, she went closer to God, taking refuge in His love and goodness, until at last she rose into all the joy of knowing and having God as the dwelling-place of her soul.

But when God sends a joy like this into any soul, it is always because it has some work to do. It is like the food He gave to Elijah under the juniper-tree, in the strength of which the prophet had to go forty days and forty nights. And so it turned out with Margaret Hope. The pestilence did not touch her. But when that was beginning to be forgotten, at the end of five years from the time of her soul's trouble, a great trial fell on her. A disease almost

worse than the pestilence laid hold of her face. And, first, one little bit of her face and then another was eaten away, until at last the whole centre of her face was gone. Margaret could no longer go out of doors—except at night. The doctors hung a patch of green silk over her face, but it was so painful to look upon, that she had no choice but to shut herself up in her room. And she became a prisoner. Except far away over the roofs of the houses she never saw the green fields again, nor a flower, except when pitying friends brought her a posy from their gardens. Morning after morning she rose to her weary task of winding pirms for the weavers in the village. A little girl came daily to do her few messages, and that was her outer life. But it was not her real life. Her real life was hid with Christ in God. Her real home also was in God. She never went back from the joy which she had learned from the two Psalms. Day by day she said to her soul : 'Soul, thou art not in an attic as I am, nor do thine eyes look forth from over a face all wasted with disease. Thou dwellest in mansions on high, in God Himself, and thine eyes behold the King in his beauty.' It was while Margaret was in the first stages of this trial that I first visited her. I found her studying her Bible. And very soon I found myself listening with all my soul to what she had found in her Bible. She had a wonderful insight into the meaning of the Bible. And she had a still more wonderful belief in the reality of it. But her strongest, surest belief was this, that God was the habitation of His people, and that there no evil, nor plague, nor wasting of flesh, nor disfigurement of face could come.

Circumstances led me to remove from that village to a distant city. And ten years went past before I saw Margaret again. And by that time a still heavier affliction had come to her. She was blind. As I went up the wooden stairs that led to her attic, I saw her door open, and her own form standing in the light. 'I knew it was you,' she said, 'I have not forgotten your step.' I spoke of her blindness as a great calamity. But she said : 'There's no blindness in the house my soul lives in. No, no night there, you know.' 'But tell me, Margaret,' I said, 'tell me the very truth : is that word still a joy for you ? Do you not feel your blindness to be an evil ?'

She was knitting a worsted stocking as I spoke, and she stopped, laid her knitting things aside, and said : 'If I were always right myself, that word would never fail me. I did think my blindness a great trial when it came. And in my grief there was, as it were, a veil over my soul. And I did not see, and I did not feel that it was true in the way I used to feel, that no evil can come nigh the dwelling. But that was only for a little time. I came back to my faith in God. And He brought me back to my vision of love and goodness in Him.'

As she was speaking a mavis began to sing on a tree outside. 'Do you hear that ?' she said eagerly. 'That is a joy I never fully knew till I became blind. The mavis, and the blackbird, and the lark,

and the redbreast, ay, and the very sparrows, have been sent into my darkness by God to cheer me. And in their different seasons they sing to me morning and evening, and all the day long. Oh, I have many joys. I think I see God better since I became blind. It is a dark world, no doubt, I live in; and to me who cannot go out at all now, it seems sometimes very dark. But dark though it be, I eye see a throne in the midst of it, and my Saviour sitting on it for me. And I hear the song of the four-and-twenty elders, and the four living ones and the angels saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

I rose to leave, and as I did so I said: 'Well, Margaret, one thing I see, that the good Lord is perfecting patience in you. And you are, no doubt, learning obedience as the Lord did by the things you suffer.'

'Do not say that, sir,' was her reply. 'My patience at its best is but impatience beside Christ's. And sometimes I am very impatient. My face and my eyes pain me, and I am often sick. And in these times I am a cross to everybody who comes near me. And at these times the light goes out of my soul, and the vision of my home in God becomes dim. And I say to myself, "Oh, Margaret, Margaret, thou art fallen now from thy dwelling on high, and thy place of refuge is no longer the heart of God, and thou art back to thy miserable attic, and to thy blindness, and to thy face that cannot be seen". But God is very kind to me. He ever comes near to me, and gives me grace to repent. And He hides me in His tabernacle as before, and says to me: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty again". And I am just waiting His time, when He shall lift me out of the attic to Himself, into His own presence, from which by temper, or sickness, or sin, I shall no more go out.'

I was drawing my hand away to leave; but she grasped it tightly, and said: 'Do not leave me. You have only been an hour. What is an hour in ten years? And to one that nearly all these years has been blind?'

She held me for some time longer. And still she talked about the ways of God. Meantime a shower of rain began to fall, and we could hear its gentle pattering on the slates. Then she let me go. Then her voice grew very tender as if she were praying, and she said: 'May the eternal God be thy refuge for ever. No evil shall befall thee there, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'

I never saw her again. But to this day when I hear the rain pattering on the slates I seem to be back in her lonesome attic, and to feel the clasp of her feeble hand. And a voice rises within me like the voice of a soul in prayer, and I hear once more the words: 'May the eternal God be thy refuge for ever. No evil shall befall thee there, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 141.

## FIGHTING DRAGONS

'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.'—PSALM XCI. 13.

**INTRODUCTORY.**—Meaning of text (cf. ver. 9). Strength comes to those who trust God, so that they need fear no enemy. E.g. Lions; cf. Daniel: [*Illustrative anecdote.*—Church in London. Lion sermon, preached every year. Man once on voyage, landed, found himself face to face with huge lion—no weapons, only prayer—lion walked away—so left money that his deliverance might be remembered every year.] The strength to do such things not ours, only, through faith, we lay hold on God's strength. [*Illustration.*—Old story of giant Geryon the 'earth-born'. Hercules fought with him, but could not conquer, for he gained more strength by touching the ground. At last lifted him off the ground—then weak and soon killed. So we, *our* strength comes by touching God, cf. ver. 1.] But:—**I. What is it to Fight Dragons?**—Picture out story in Genesis III.; cf. Revelation XII. 9-11. Who else had to face the same enemy and conquered him? [*Illustrate from Matthew iv. 1-11.*]

So at baptism, what the first part of our promise? 'Renounce, etc.'. [*Picture out a baptism in old time—person to be baptized first turned to the west—the cave of darkness—and said 'I renounce thee, Satan'—then to the east, the home of light, and recited creed.] So the great Dragon we have to fight is—? and we may conquer by making God our refuge.*

**II. A Girl who Conquered the Dragon.**—Often see picture or representation of St. George and the Dragon. Sometimes, too, picture of a woman standing over a dragon whom she has killed. Find her name in Prayer Book [see calendar, 20th July]. Margaret lived at Antioch in Pisidia—where Paul preached, Acts XIII. 14—more than two hundred years after Paul (278 A.D.). The moon worshipped there as a man, and other false gods, but not as they used to be before Christ. Rulers determined to *make* people worship them. Picture scene. Magistrate (Olybrius), soldiers, altar, idols. People brought up—incense ready—enough to put some incense on altar before the idol—sign they worshipped it. One young girl, Margaret, brought up before the Prefect, refused to sprinkle incense, said, 'I am a Christian'—told them to do their worst—'tried by shame and torture,' would not yield. Like Stephen, saw one at hand to help her—so killed, not conquered, but conquering.

When children—perhaps girls—say 'so small and weak, can't conquer Satan'—think what this girl did! How? So we, 'all things through Christ who strengthens us'. Even a girl like St. Margaret may 'trample the dragon under feet'.

**III. Some of our Special Dragons.**—Not always same appearance to all—the great dragon has many children.

E.g. Ill-temper, who hides in the cave called

'sulkiness'. Unkindness, who lives near the cave 'cruelty'. Indolence (sloth), etc. [Apply practically from every-day experience. E.g. boy at dinner—more and more and more—the dragon 'greediness'—must fight him—trample upon him.] Every day plenty of opportunities—all temptations to evil are dragons in disguise. Remember then to be on the watch, ready to fight when the moment comes. If, by prayer, we make the Lord our refuge, we too may 'trample the dragon under feet'.

*Note.*—The story of St. Margaret may also be used in connection with Matthew xiii. 46 ('one pearl of great price') which has sometimes been interpreted of the human soul, which Christ, the merchantman, seeks and buys. Sketch thus:—

*Introduction.*—A girl once called Margaret—why should parents have given her that name? Perhaps only because it sounded pretty, or perhaps because the lassie looked so pure and lovely that they thought no name could suit her better—for Margaret, in their language, meant 'a pearl'. Did they remember how pearls are made? (explain). Beauty and worth won through suffering! Anyway, she earned the name [narrate her story]. Never more beautiful—more pearl-like—than when she conquered death by dying—'a pearl of great price' such as our Lord loves.

And if she is a model of what we may be—conquerors in spite of weakness—so we may learn, too, as perhaps she did, something from thinking about the pearl which she was called after. Think:—

#### 1. *Pearls are small.*

Some very small—none very large—like children, babies and upwards. Some, perhaps, like black pearls—(query, 'boys')—not so beautiful, but may be more valuable. For, though small,

#### 2. *Pearls are valuable.*

So children—'Oh, but I am not'—ask your mother what she thinks. And every one is valuable; ask the Father of us all in heaven—what did He give for us? The price paid shows the value. Ought to be careful of that for which He has paid so highly. For,

#### 3. *Pearls are easily tarnished, and when tarnished hard to clean.*

How hard to regain one's character when once lost! Who can cleanse? [Holy Spirit 'sanctifying'—like cleansing tarnished pearls.]

Lastly,

#### 4. *Pearls beautiful in themselves, look best when they are set beautifully.*

What the right setting for us? Is it not the righteousness of Christ? Sum up and apply.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 144.

### THE YOUNG LION AND THE DRAGON

'Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.'—PSALM XCI. 13.

I. WHAT kind of temptations come upon us like a lion? Why, all such as would stir us up to disobedience, or to anger or hatred; all such as seem to

assault us first of all from without. Some one is unkind, or we think so; some one speaks harshly, or we think so; and then, instead of remembering by whose name we are called, by the Name of Him 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; of Him Who when He was accused of many things, answered never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly—we work ourselves up into a passion, call hard names, try to hurt those that have hurt us, sometimes are quite carried away by the violence of our passion; so that we scarcely know what we are doing any more than if we were really and truly mad. That is the temptation coming upon us like a lion. And I will tell you another way in which it comes like a lion; when we have done something wrong, or have had some unfortunate accident, and a great terrible fear falls upon us, and so we are tempted to deny it; and so we tell one lie to begin with, and almost always two or three more to prevent that first lie from being found out. This temptation, too, comes upon us like a lion, and, if we are not very, very careful, may carry us off at once. 'Thou shalt go upon the lion,' is the promise; that is, Thou shalt be able to conquer such fierce strong temptations that leap down on you all of a sudden, and come upon you from without.

II. Then what is meant by 'the adder'? Why, those temptations which creep quietly into our hearts, one can hardly tell how, and are only known to ourselves, and go on poisoning, poisoning, till at last, unless God's great mercy save us, they destroy us just as surely as those other lion-like attacks of Satan. What kind do I mean? Why, such thoughts as those of pride and conceit that lie deep down in our minds, which we should be very much afraid to tell to anyone, but which we ourselves take great pleasure in. As anyone of you might be tempted to think that she was cleverer, or prettier, or a greater favourite than others; and instead, if it be so indeed, of asking, as St. Paul does, 'What hast thou that thou has not received?' should be apt to fancy that it is her own powers or goodness which have got these things for her. That is a very poisonous adder. But I will tell you of one still more poisonous; and that is, when we allow impure thoughts, not only to come into our minds, but to stay there, and instead of hunting them out at once, take pleasure in them. Remember this, any wicked thought may come into the mind of any servant of God, even of a Saint: that he cannot help. Evil spirits have the power of whispering them to us, and we can no more help that than we can help hearing a wicked word, or an oath, as we go by in the streets. So that never should make anyone unhappy. The sin does not begin till we allow it to remain there, encourage it to stop, ask it to come again. And my children, any of you who so fall into temptation are in great danger indeed. Yes, Satan is very dangerous when he comes as a lion; but much more dangerous when he comes as an adder. For the outward show of passion and anger, people generally get over as they grow up. I have seen a



child, in a fit of passion, throw itself on the floor and bite the carpet with its teeth; but no man or woman would do so except a savage. The anger is, very likely, just as deep down in their hearts. Nay, perhaps they may feel more malice and hatred, but they get a certain sort of mastery over their outward actions, because they know that they would not be thought fit to live in the society of men if they did not. But the adder-temptations of Satan, to pride, vanity, selfishness, impurity; these are just as bad in grown-up persons as in children; and often very much worse.

The first part of the verse was, 'Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder': then why does it go on, 'the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet'? For this reason: all temptations are not equally strong. And so you might say, God's grace can help me through little temptations: but how, when I go out into the world, and meet with great ones? Why, it will be just the same thing then. 'The lion and the adder': these are bad enough, but they are not so bad as 'the young lion'—that is, the lion in the chiefest of his strength—'and the dragon'. A lion can leap on you and tear you in pieces, but he cannot poison; an adder can poison, but he cannot tear and rend: but a dragon can tear, and rend, and poison all at once: and besides, has wings to enable him to fly, and a tail with a cruel sting. So he is put last, as the worst of all. But however bad, however terrible Satan's temptations are, God's power is far greater; and therefore it says, 'The young lion and the dragon shalt thou'—not only conquer, but—'tread under thy feet'.

A few days ago I was at Dratford, in Kent, where there are great gunpowder mills. Here they make vast quantities of gunpowder, and store it up in barrels. But the making it is very dangerous, because if the least spark were to get among the materials, the whole building, and every house near it, would be blown to pieces. When you go to see it, you first find a bare piece of ground all round the building itself—no shrubs or trees—to prevent any possibility of their being set on fire in a dry summer. Then you knock at a very strong gate, and enter a long stone passage, side and roof stone also. Then you are examined to see if you have any matches or steel, that might strike fire; your shoes are taken off, lest the nails in them should strike light; your coat, if it has steel buttons, is taken off; and so you are led through the great cold halls where these men sit grinding nitre, and saltpetre, and charcoal together. Do what they can, it is very dangerous work, and the men are paid very high. I remember once, while sitting at home in a house about twelve miles from these mills, hearing the windows violently shaken, and feeling the whole house tremble. The mills had blown up, and every soul in them perished.

Well, then, if so much care is taken, and most rightly, that no accident should happen here, how careful ought we to be, seeing there is so much gunpowder of corruption in our minds, not to let any spark of temptation, if we can help it, be set to it!

Think of this when next time you say, 'And lead us not into temptation'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children* (2nd edition) p. 181.

#### HOW TO BEGIN THE DAY

'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High: to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night.'—PSALM XCII. 1, 2.

Yes, it is a good thing; you may not be able to know at the time why, yet it is a good thing—good for you, and good for everybody round you—to begin and end the day with God.

It is good in the morning—for it gives us the right keynote for the day.

You are singers—very nice singers, too, some of you—and you know something about music. Do you know what *flattening* means? It is like this: sometimes, when people are singing, they forget what the right sound should be, and all their notes get lower and lower; for the one has to push the other down so as to make it keep its proper distance; and the worst of it is, the singer has no idea of how far he has gone wrong till he hears the keynote struck: then he knows!

That is just the way with people who try to get on without God; without thinking of Him in the morning, without praying to Him, or reading a bit of His Word. The music of their life keeps going down and down—it *flattens*; and the worst of it is, they don't know it. Others observe it; people round them can tell it, but they can't themselves, for they don't listen for the keynote. Be you wiser; make sure of this—that it is a good thing to begin with God in the morning. That will help you to keep your heart high and right all through the day.

And it is a good thing to end the day with God. You are going to forget Him, and forget everybody for a little, while you sleep. But He is not going to forget you; it would be a bad, bad thing for you if He did. He is going to watch over you in the night, just as He did through the day. Think of that! God standing like a faithful sentinel to protect you when you cannot protect yourself! Will you go to sleep without thanking Him? without thinking of Him? without one loving word for Him? That's *not* good, not kind; and nobody can grow up right, or strong, or wise, or loving who does that.

So end the day as you begin it, by having a little time alone with God, and though you may not be able now to know why, by and by, when you grow up, when you know things better and see them clearer, you too will say—and say it, oh! with such a glad and grateful heart: 'It was *good* for me to begin and end all my days with God!'—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 207.

#### THE PALM-TREE

†The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.'—PSALM XCII. 12-14.

Among the trees of Palestine the palm, or date-palm, was one of the chief, though it is now as rare there as

the righteous man whose image it is. In David's day it towered to some one hundred feet, the prince of green things, excelling all other plants in beauty and fruitfulness. The Romans used it as a symbol of conquered Judea, and the Crusader monk was called a holy 'palmer' because he returned bearing a palm branch. It was often planted in the enclosures of palaces and churches, and it probably flourished in the Temple courts in the Psalmist's time. Or perhaps when he wrote our text he had in his eye the palm-trees that adorned the doors and walls of the Temple. We shall now sit down for a few minutes under the shadow of David's palm. May its fruit be sweeter to us than any that ever grew on a tree of wood. A young Christian, planted in the favoured soil, and within the sheltering fence of the Church, is like the palm flourishing in the courts of the Temple. As that palm is the tree of trees, the best at its very best, so he should become the man of men, she of women the most graceful.

This palm-tree shall be our teacher as we examine—

I. Its roots.

II. Its growth.

III. Its gratefulness.

IV. Its fruits.

**I. The Roots.**—An Indian missionary tells that near his new home he found a splendid palm-grove in the burning desert. It was a miracle of life amid death. Digging down some forty feet, he came to the roots and abundance of cool water, and the mystery was explained. The tree at that end was all mouth, and was sucking in, night and day, the water leaning on its surface. Its thousands of root-hairs and root-fibres were each opening and shutting like the mouth of a fish, or the lips of a panting animal. Driven by thirst and the fear of perishing through the burning sands and beyond the sun's scorching rays, its life was the life of emptiness drawing upon the exhaustless fulness of hidden springs—a fitting picture of a Christian in a heathen land. But a Christian child in a Christian family is like the palm planted by God's hand in the holy soil, and amid the genial sunshine of the sanctuary.

You must have a *root of your own*. Your father cannot act for you here. Your mother cannot give your heart to the Saviour. Your own spirit must take hold of Christ, and cleave to Him, and draw sap and fulness from Him; being 'rooted in Him,' 'being rooted and grounded in love'. And your roots should strike deep. You must send down little rootlets of thought, feeling, faith, and prayer. As the secret of the palm's life is hidden moisture, so your life is hid with Christ in God. Have a care that your roots are buried far out of sight, where no eye of man can see them. And be like the palm, the thirstiest of plants, always receiving the 'water of life'.

**II. Its Growth.**—The life-blood of the tree is the sap which the greedy roots draw from the soil, and which the leaves change into food. Without sap the tree is only wood, and that wood rottenness, which

breaks off like a mushroom at the first touch. But God's palm-trees are 'fat and flourishing'; they flourish without because they are fat within. The Word of God is the sap which, by faith and prayer, is turned into the life-blood of your soul. As newborn babes you are to desire the unmixed Word of God, that you may grow thereby. The Greek word for wisdom was borrowed from the sap of a tree: their wise man was the *sappy* man. Heavenly wisdom does for the soul what the sap does for the tree. But the formalist has no inner life, and resembles the Christian as sapless timber resembles the living tree.

The palm-tree is a splendid grower because it is a great receiver. Every hour, through its every pore, it is receiving something from earth, and sea, and sky. Its every leaf has myriads of mouths with which it receives the gifts of God's bounty. And the soul's growth is always measured by its power of receiving. The heart that lies open on every side to receive the grace of God shall flourish like the palm-tree.

The palm belongs to the class called *inside-growers*. By increase at the heart it grows from within outwards; it grows heavenwards, all around, and always. Though marks of growth may not appear on the outside, it is always gathering fresh strength at the core and carrying it to every part. And how silently and steadily it grows! How blessed we should be if we grew in grace as the palm grows in stature!

**II. The Gratefulness of the Palm.**—The Easterns have a passionate love of the palm, whose beauty makes them glad. The Jews often give its name, Tamar, to women (Gen. xxxviii. 6; 2 Sam. xiv. 11); and their poets often compared their brides to it. 'This thy stature is like the palm' (Song of Sol. vii. 7). Solomon could find nothing more graceful with which to adorn the Temple. With the Jews the palm-tree was the favourite image of perfect and manifold beauty. Our text thus teaches that to be full of grace is to have the highest beauty. We admit this every time we use the word gratefulness.

*The beauty of the palm is increased by contrast.*—This evergreen prince of the vegetable world towers above the stunted heath and the yellow shrivelled grass, preserving its freshness when all around decays and withers under the intolerable sun. Many a time David shows us by contrast the beauty of the godly life. Thus in the first Psalm he places two pictures side by side. The godly man is like the tree growing on the river-bank, and the ungodly is like the sapless chaff which the wind drives to and fro. Have you ever thought how small, mean, and ugly is the life of the goddess; and how rich and beautiful is the life of a true Christian? Look on this picture and on that, and make your choice.

*The palm has also the beauty of perfect straightness.*—There it rises like a tall mast, without a leaf except at the top, which, like a graceful parasol, shelters its fruit from the scorching sun. It thus offers no handle by which the whirlwinds could seize and overturn it. It could not live if it did not caress

everything to its upward growth. Grace should take away from you every false and crooked thing, and teach you to abhor all by-paths, low cunning, and untruthfulness. Under temptation conscience should call forth in you a noble resistance, which would make you lean the other way. You are no child of God if you are not simple, sincere, and straightforward.

*And the palm is an evergreen, and its green is always exquisitely fresh.*—When all else is yellow and sad, its leaves are not discoloured by the sand of the desert or the scorching sun. It has somehow a self-purifying virtue by which it manages to throw off every taint, and to remain always the same. And as it brings forth fruit, so it retains its beauty in old age, defying the ravages of time. Its lifetime is all youth, its year all spring. The saying, ‘a green old age,’ is probably borrowed from this verse. The life of body and mind must grow less in old age, but the life of your soul need not. God does not mean your inner man to decay along with your outer. If your roots are sunk into God’s grace and truth, you may flourish in old age like the evergreen palm-tree.

**IV. Its Fruits.**—Without fruit a tree is little better than a log. All God does for the tree points to fruit. He has weighed and balanced the whole mass of the earth, some one has said, that the tree might be fruitful. The tree pours its heart and life into the fruit, which draws something from every root, and leaf, and branch, from every dew of heaven and every ray of sunshine, from every changing wind and wandering cloud. And such is the origin of the good deeds without which a human life is like the barren fig-tree which Christ condemned.

Plainly David does not expect his palm-tree to be planted in old age, but in youth; for the old age of those he likens to the palm-tree lies in the far-off future. Old trees do not usually bear transplanting. Their uprooting is a terrible wrench, and they seldom take well in the new soil, nor do they bring forth fruit to perfection. The forster chooses his saplings from the nursery. The best nurslings of heaven are those that be planted early in the house of the Lord. They ‘shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.’ Make sure that you are among them.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 171.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF TROUBLE

‘Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest’.—PSALM XCIV. 12. I wish to speak of *three* ways in which Jesus makes trouble or chastisement a blessing to His people.

**I.** The *first* way in which Jesus makes trouble a blessing to His people is by **Saving them from Danger by it.**—One reason why we find it so hard to believe, when trouble comes upon us, that God intends it to do us good, and be a blessing, is that we can’t see *how* it is to be so. We almost always have to wait awhile before this can be seen; but as soon as we find out what God intends any trial to do for us, we see that it *was* a real blessing.

A merchant was one day returning from market

on horseback. His saddle-bags were filled with money which he had got for what he had been selling. Soon after he started it began to rain. It rained very hard, and he soon got wet through. This vexed him very much, and he went on murmuring to himself that God had sent him such bad weather for his journey. Pretty soon he reached the border of a thick piece of woods. Just as he was going into the woods he was very much alarmed to see a robber standing by the side of the road with a gun in his hand. As soon as he came up to him, the robber levelled his gun, took aim, and pulled the trigger, but it didn’t go off. The same rain which had wet him through had made the robber’s powder so damp that it wouldn’t fire. And before he could prime his gun again the merchant had put spurs to his horse and escaped. As soon as he found that he was safe, he said to himself: ‘How wrong it was for me to murmur against the rain! I thought it was a great trouble to have it; but now I see God sent it to be a blessing. If it had not been for that rain, I should have lost my life and property.’

Some years ago an American man-of-war was lying at anchor in the Bay of Naples. The commander had his son with him on board. He was a little fellow of eight or nine years old—a very bright, smart boy, and a great pet with all the officers and crew. He was very fond of climbing up the rigging, and would sometimes venture farther than it was safe for him to go. One day, while his father was in the cabin taking a nap after dinner, he was playing on deck. No one seemed to be noticing him, and he thought he would go up the rigging of the main-mast and see how far he could climb. He got up to the cross-trees. Then he went to the top-gallant-mast; and then to the royal yards. That was the highest yard or cross-piece belonging to the main-mast. There he rested awhile. Then he swarmed up the mast, and got on to what the sailors call ‘the main-truck’. This is the circular piece of wood that is at the very top of the mast. How he did it I cannot imagine; but by some means or other he managed to get up and stand erect on that little piece of wood, at that giddy, dangerous height. He enjoyed his lofty position for a while; but when he thought of getting down he began to feel troubled. And now the officers and sailors on deck saw him, and were greatly distressed. They trembled to think of the danger their favourite was in. They ran about the deck in great excitement. No one knew what to do. If he stooped to get down he would be sure to fall. If they attempted to go to him their weight would sway the trembling mast and shake him off, and he would be dashed to pieces. In the midst of this excitement his father came on deck. He saw at a glance the peril of his darling boy. He knew there was but one thing to save him. He rushed into the cabin and seized a loaded gun in one hand and a speaking-trumpet in the other. The little fellow was trembling, and losing his presence of mind. Every one feared each moment to see his mangled body fall



to the deck. But now the commander has returned. He stands on the quarter-deck. He lifts the speaking-trumpet to his mouth, and in a clear, ringing voice, cries out, 'Jump into the water, or I'll shoot you!' The little fellow stoops down to gather up his strength. He gives a spring out into the air to clear the deck of the ship, and then like an arrow he goes diving down into the calm, clear water of the bay. As quick as lightning a dozen or twenty sailors plunge in after him. Soon he is safe on deck, and the tears flow down his father's weather-beaten cheeks like rain, as he presses his dear boy to his bosom, snatched from such a dreadful death.

It seemed like a cruel thing in that father to threaten to shoot his boy. But it was not so. It was the kindest thing he ever did for him. It saved him from a terrible death. Nothing but that jump could have saved him. His father knew this when he drove him to it. And so God often sends trouble to drive His people away from things that will harm them. The first way in which He makes trouble a blessing to His people, is *by saving them from Danger.*

II. *The second way in which He does this is By Fitting them for Usefulness.*—Hardly anything can be made useful without trouble. Suppose you had a piece of golden ore from one of the mines in California. Well, you examine it, and see that there are pieces of gold here and there in it, which make it very valuable. But they are all mixed up with earth and rocks in such a way that nothing can be done with it. Before you can make any use of it you must break it into pieces and put it in the furnace, and raise a great fire over it, till the gold melts and runs out from the dross. Then you get the pure gold by itself, and can employ it for any useful purpose that you wish.

There is a sheaf of grain from the harvest field. It is very valuable; but in its present state it can't be used for any good purpose. It must be thrashed to separate it from the ear. Then it must be fanned, or winnowed, to separate it from the chaff. And then it must be taken to the mill and ground into flour before it is fit for use.

And Christians are like gold in the ore. The good in them is mixed up with dross. God has to use the hammer and the fire of trouble or affliction upon them to melt the gold in them and separate it from the dross.

Christians are like the grain in the ear. God has to thrash them and winnow them and grind them before they are fit for the purpose for which He wants to use them. And He makes use of trouble to do this.

III. *The third way in which God makes trouble a blessing to His people, is By Leading them to true Happiness.*—When summer comes among the Alps, in Switzerland, the shepherds lead their flocks far up the sides of the mountains, where the best pasture can be found. If they stay down on the plains and in the valleys the pasture will fail, and they will

have nothing to eat. But away up the mountains there is plenty of good pasture. One summer a shepherd was driving his flock up towards those pleasant pastures. But there was one place in the road which he could not get the sheep to go past. There was a narrow chasm or opening right across the path, and when they came to the edge of it, instead of leaping over, as he wanted them to do, they would turn round, and scamper away in another direction. He tried several times to get them past that place, but in vain. At last he took up in his arms a little lamb belonging to one of his sheep. The mother sheep, or dam, watched him closely to see what he was going to do with it. Instead of driving his flock from behind them, he now went on before them, carrying the lamb in his arms. He crossed over the chasm in the path, and went straight on, up the side of the mountain. The mother followed after the shepherd who had her lamb in his arms. She leaped across the opening and kept close to the shepherd. The other sheep followed her, one after another, till pretty soon the whole flock were going up the mountain after the shepherd, to the place where the good pastures were to which he desired to lead them.

And God deals with His people in just the same way. He calls to them in His word and by His ministers to become Christians, and walk in the narrow way which will lead them up the heavenly mountain to the good pastures in which He would have them feed for ever. But like the sheep just spoken of, they turn aside and wander off in the wrong direction. Then God sends trouble upon them, and takes away their children or other blessings from them, till at last, like the sheep whose lamb was taken from her side, they follow Him in the path up which He desires to lead them.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 89.

#### THE EAR-GATE

'He that planteth the ear, shall He not hear.'—PSALM XCVIII. 4.

AWAY in Denmark there is an old castle called Kronberg, close by the Sound of Elsinore. Beneath this castle is a dark, tremendous cavern with the deep boom of the waves ever echoing within its rocky walls. And there inside, the Danish legend tells us, sits Holgar the Dane, sunk in deepest sleep. But in his dreams he hears above the distant thunder of the waves all the sounds that rise in the world without. From its lightest whisper to its loudest noise, he hears all in that dark cavern sunk in the hill. So in your ear and mine there is a dark chamber, not vast like the cave by Elsinore, but small as a cherry stone, and there is another Holgar, not dreaming, but all alert. And, as to Holgar, there come to it in the darkness of its strange abode the voices and the noise of the world around us. What a wonderful chamber it is! Surely it is the most wonderful in all the world. It is there we hear the music of the birds and the streams and the trees, it is there we hear the

great roll of the thunder that comes crashing on our ear from the distant heavens, it is there we hear the gentle voices we love to hear and to obey. We generally speak of these things as if we heard them outside of us; but it is not so. It is all heard in that dark little chamber within the head.

Is it any wonder that we should call this one of the most extraordinary chambers in the world when such strange things can go on in it? Surely we ought to pity with all our hearts those who cannot hear, for what a world of joy and interest they have lost! The little chamber may have its forlorn spirit within, waiting so anxiously for some message from the outer world; but it never comes, for all the doors have been shut, the connections all broken, and in a profound stillness that must be most painful to bear, the soul sits patiently waiting till the long silence is broken by the voice of God Himself.

There are many lessons we can draw from this gateway of knowledge. We can apply to the ear the teaching we got from the eye.

**I. Use your Ears.**—Just as there is seeing and seeing, so there is hearing and hearing. How often do we come across the expression used about somebody that what they hear goes in at one ear and out at the other! I would rather say, it goes in at the porch and may get the length of the outer lobby but it is never really taken into the house, into the ear itself. Boys and girls who answer to this description hear things but they do not understand. The sound never gets inside the house to the inner chamber, and so the true meaning of what they hear is never really grasped. This is true of our daily lessons and it is true of our Sabbath hearing. We hear the sermon on Sabbath; we let it into the inside lobby, but we do not take it right in, and so when Monday comes it has slipped out at the door again and is forgotten. The great lesson, therefore, for us to learn is, to take in what we hear, thoroughly; to try and understand what it means, and then it is much more likely to remain inside as part of the furnishings of that inner chamber of the mind.

**II. Listen only to the Best.**—That inner spirit of the ear has to receive all that comes to it; it cannot help it, and it sends all the evil things that we hear, as well as the good, into the brain. And when sin gets in, it has a habit of staying in and spoiling everything else inside. Never, if you can help it, listen to anything bad, unkind or unclean. It is far easier to keep these things out than to turn them out once they are in. Remember, the ear can take in all the sounds of the world; it cannot let out any. Let us be careful, then, to listen only to the best. This of course is not easy; it is not always possible. We very often cannot help hearing things we would have been much better not to have heard, but the real harm is done, not so much in the hearing, as in the dwelling upon and remembering such things. This we can all help, and it ought to be our earnest endeavour to put all such things resolutely away from us at once. There is a striking phrase of Luther, the

great Reformer, that we should always keep in mind — 'I cannot help foul birds flying over my head,' he said, 'but I can easily prevent them from building their nests in my hair'. He means that we cannot always help the evil things that are flying through the air, coming within our reach, but we can refrain from giving them a shelter and lodging in our own heart. A sinful world cannot but be full of evil suggestions. Let us see to it that we give them no encouragement, for as Luther hints they will only too readily take up their home with us and grow and multiply, till they have crowded out all the good we had in our heart.

**III. Then, remember the soldier's motto, To Hear is to Obey.**—Is that true of us? Are we always ready to obey when we hear the command to do something? No one can ever forget that story of little Henry Havelock, how his father left him one day at twelve o'clock on London Bridge and told him to wait there until he came back for him. His father went away, and in the pressure of business forgot all about his little son until seven o'clock in the evening, when in the house of a friend he suddenly remembered his promise. He was sure he would find his boy, for he had been trained to obey. And there, sure enough, was little Henry just where his father left him, quite contented, and never doubting but that his father would come for him as he had said. That was a boy who heard and obeyed. Let us try to imitate him and be obedient to those who have a right to command us. We all admire soldiers; let us never forget that the first thing that makes a true soldier is, Obedience.

**IV. Once more, Never Forget to Listen for God's Voice.**—Perhaps you did not know that God speaks to you, and that you can hear. You all have a conscience which tells you when you go wrong. That is just hearing the voice of God, and if you will only listen you will always hear Him speaking to you and telling you what to do. We have just seen how God spoke to St. Francis and gave him guidance in the great task of his life. And there was that extraordinary girl, Joan of Arc, who from her earliest days used to hear voices speaking to her from heaven. In obedience to these she finally left her quiet, humble home, and weak girl as she was, in obedience to the voice of God, she went forth at the head of a great army to free her country from the yoke of the oppressor. Yes, God speaks if we will only listen, and to hear Him is surely to obey, for He calls us only to what is wisest and best.—J. THOMSON, *The Six Gates*, p. 28.

### THE BAD MEMORY

'Forget not all His benefits.'—PSALM CIII. 2.

A STATESMAN of ancient Greece was once talking with a friend, when his friend said, O that some one would teach me to remember! The statesman answered, Nay, rather teach me to forget. That was long centuries ago, but I think that to-day there is not one of us but would still be fain to learn that art of forgetting

Some sight we have seen, some word we have spoken, some deed we have done, how much we would give if we could blot the memory of it out. Yet such are just the things we never do forget. Like wounds in the flesh they are burned into our memories. They sleep, it may be, but only to wake at unexpected moments, and to confront us when we wish it least. What we would fain forget we often best remember. What we would fain remember, it is not that we are most ready to forget? Ah, yes. The Fall has worked ruin in our memories, no less than in our hearts.

Now I am sure of this, if there be one thing we might be expected to remember, it is God's loving-kindnesses. To the angels in heaven it must seem incredible that any here to-day should have forgotten the benefits of God. Yet of forgetting them we all are guilty. David made no mistake. He knew the temptation to forget, and you and I still know the same. Come then and let me speak to you a little on our forgetfulness of the benefits of God.

I. And first I wish to ask, why are we all so ready to forget them?

It is because we are so accustomed to them that our hearts are hardened. Some one has said that if all the stars in heaven were to cease shining for a hundred years, and then were suddenly to flash out again, there would not be an eye in all the earth but would be raised heavenward, and not a heart in all the world but would break forth in hymns of praise to God. But the stars are shining every night. They were there when you were crooning in your cradles. They will be there when you are sleeping in your graves. And you and I are so accustomed to them, we never lift our heads and fret and cry and quarrel every night perhaps, forgetful of these shining remembrancers of God. So with God's benefits. Did they come rarely, singly, unexpectedly, how we should prize them. But they have been over us like the heavens, round us like the air, under us like the earth ever since we were born. And we are so accustomed to them that our hearts are hardened.

II. Now let me give you some simple hints for mastering this forgetfulness. I want you to have better memories for all God's benefits. And such you will have if you lay to heart these simple rules.

1. *Strive to see God's hand in all that befalls you.*—Strike out from your dictionaries such words as fate, misfortune, luck. Remember you are children of a King, not children of a chance. And honour God by seeing in everything some movement of your Father's hand.

Among the old and dusty books that sleep on your father's shelves is one that you have never read yet. But when you grow a little older I trust you all will read it. For what Jesus said of the old wine is often true of the old books—they are far better than the new. Well, this old book is called the *Memoirs of Thomas Boston*. And Thomas Boston lived some hundred years ago, and was one of those faithful ministers whom God gives from time to time as His best gifts to Scotland. And when you come to read these

*Memoirs of Thomas Boston* I know what will arrest you first. It will be this. Whatever befell Boston, you are sure to find him on his knees asking God to reveal to him the meaning of the providence. Did his wife sicken, did his child die, was he detained from a Sacrament by snowstorms, did his horse cast a shoe, you will have Thomas Boston asking God to let him see the meaning of it. And very often God was pleased to do it. Till Boston grew to feel that in God he lived and moved and had his being, and that God was doing all things well. And till, instead of murmuring and fretting, he came to have a heart so full of praise and thankfulness and humble resignation that the fragrance of it breathes through Scotland yet. And why should not you live to be like Thomas Boston? What is to hinder you from keeping such a prayerful heart and such an open eye that you will be as quick to detect God as was Boston? Then you will grow in gratitude. And he who grows in gratitude is growing in grace.

2. Again, *go over your mercies in detail.*—Begin and try and count them. And for the first time you will learn how deeply and how hopelessly you are in your Father's debt. There are some boys here who are learning Latin. They will translate these words for us, *Generalia non purgant*. They were framed by good men of long ago; and they mean, a general confession of our sin will never purge the soul. We must go at it sin by sin. So we may say, *Generalia non laudant*, a general thankfulness never praises God. We must get to it benefit by benefit if we want to know what we owe God. David knew that. David did that. And never was there a man who better knew than noble David how to confess sin and how to remember benefits. He cried to his soul, 'Forget not all His benefits'. Then he began to number them. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities—one. Who healeth all thy diseases—two. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction—three. Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and with tender mercies—four. And so on through a whole Psalm. I wonder if you could sing a Psalm like that out of your own hearts to-day. Begin and try. For not till you do that, in your own words and way, will you ever waken to the thronging mercies wherewith God has engirdled you.

3. Do not forget that *you have to meet God face to face.*—Young people, you and the Giver of all good must yet stand face to face. And if God has given you health and strength, and sight and hearing, and parents and homes, and a thousand things besides, and you have forgotten them all and never thanked Him for them, I want to know how you will meet Him in that great day? I heard of a girl who got a present from a young friend in Connecticut; and she said, 'I can't be bothered acknowledging this, and after all it doesn't matter much, for I'll never likely see my friend again'. Did you ever do that? *But we're all doing that with God.* We get His gifts and use them, and then we say in our hearts, 'Our God is very far away, why should I trouble to thank



Him?' Remember you must meet Him. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye you may be called. What will you do then if you have used God's gifts and never thanked Him? How can you hope to look on Jesus unashamed with your forgetful and ungrateful heart?

4. And if you would not forget God's benefits, see that you live in close companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ.—A gift is always a gift. But when a gift comes from one we love it has a double value in our eyes. It is the giver makes the gift precious. Your sister has a withered flower in her Bible. It is not worth a penny. But to her it is very dear, because it was given by one who loved her. Your mother has toys and string and socks and boots lying in the drawer. They would not fetch ten shillings in the market. But she would not sell them for ten pounds, for they belonged to your little brother who died. Ah, how she loved him. And they were *his*, and so she loves them too.

So with God's loving-kindnesses. Strive to take all out of the hand of Jesus. In every bite you eat, in every drop you drink, in all you have and all you get long to see Him Who loves you and Who died for you on Calvary.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 103.

#### ON THE EVIL OF FORGETTING GOD

'Forget not all His benefits.'—PSALM CIII. 2.

I. IN the Bible the most beautiful things are taken to describe the good that comes into a life that remembers God. But to describe the evil that comes upon a life that forgets God, things the most terrible are used. Among these terrible things is a tempest. Our Lord, speaking of one who hears His sayings but forgets to do them, says: He is like a house on which 'the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat, and it fell, and great was the fall of it'. The old prophets also, telling of cities that had forgotten God, and of evil days coming on them in consequence of that, describe these days as days of wind and tempest which shall smite and overthrow the cities, and at last leave them mere heaps of ruin. And in the chapter of Ecclesiastes, where young people are exhorted to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, the Preacher speaks of evil days sure to come if they fail to remember Him, days in which they shall say 'we have no pleasure in them'. These days, so evil that the soul can find no pleasure in them, are likened to days in which the heavens are filled with tempest, in which the tempest breaks upon the house, and the house is wrapped round with terror and desolation and death.

As often as I read this chapter I seem to see the scene it describes. I see a fair mansion among stately trees, standing in beautiful grounds, and filled and surrounded with life and joy. The sun is shining. The doors are open to its light. The men are working in the fields. The maid-servants are grinding the corn.

The ladies are looking out at the open windows. Through these windows I see for the evening hours golden lamps hung on silver cords. In the court I see a deep well with wheel and bucket to supply the house with water. Everything is touched with life and joy. The swallows are shooting down from the eaves. The singing birds are filling the woods with song. It is a happy time for that house, a day in which God is pouring out His mercies, a day to remember Him. But this is a house where God is not remembered. Those who live there receive His kindness and are unthankful. They take His gifts, but spend them on themselves. And days and years go past in which He is patient, waiting to see if they will even yet turn to Him. And then come days in which things begin to change. The early joys do not return. And day comes after day, and no pleasure with them. At last comes a day of terror. The heavens are black with clouds. The clouds dissolve in rain. More clouds overspread the sky, heavier, blacker than before. Lightnings flash; thunders roll; wind and rain beat upon the once beautiful house. The masters, bending beneath the blast, hurry in from the field. The door is shut. The ladies shrink back in terror from the windows. The maids flee from their grinding at the mill. Even the men-servants begin to tremble. Outside, the birds that made the air happy with song are either leaping and shrieking with fear or silent. On all inside fear descends; they cannot eat; death is coming upon them. The tempest snaps the cords on which the lamps are hanging; breaks the very bucket that brings up water from the well. It will soon be all over with that house. House, inhabitants, life, joy, industry—all are wrapped round about by the darkness, and about to be overwhelmed by the terrible tempest which has come crashing out of the sky from God.

And all that tempest, with all the ruin it works, is the picture of the destruction that descends from heaven on every life that forgets God.

II. One of the first stories I recall from my childhood was a story of the evil of forgetting God. I remember the very spot on which it was told to me. I feel the warm grasp of the hand which had hold of mine at the time. I see once more the little seaport town stretching up from the river mouth, with its straggling 'fisher town' at one extremity, and at the other its rows of well-built streets and its town hall and academy. On this occasion we were standing on a high bank looking down on the beautiful shore at our feet. Across the tiny harbour, and along the shore on the other side of the river, is a very different scene. What one sees there is a dreary waste of sand. No grass grows there, no trees shadow it, no house stands upon it. It is a place forsaken and desolate. It has been a desolation longer than the oldest inhabitant can remember. But it was not always desolate. It was once a fair estate, rich in cornfields and orchards. A stately mansion stood in the midst of it, and children played in the orchards,

and reapers reaped the corn. But the lords of that fair estate were an evil race. They oppressed the poor, they despised religion, they did not remember God. They loved pleasure more than God, and the pleasures they loved were evil. To make an open show of their evil ways they turned the day of the Lord into a day of rioting and drunkenness. And this evil went on a long while. It went on till the long-suffering of God came to an end. And then upon a Sunday evening, and in the harvest-time when the corn was whitening for the reaper, the riot and wickedness had come to a height. The evil lord and his evil guests were feasting in the hall of the splendid house. And on that very evening there came a sudden darkness and stillness into the heavens, and out of the darkness a wind, and out of the wind a tempest; and, as if that tempest had been a living creature, it lifted the sand from the shore in great whirls and clouds, and filled the air with it, and dropped it down in blinding, suffocating showers on all those fields of corn, and on that mansion, and on the evildoers within. And the fair estate, with all its beautiful gardens and fields, became a wide-spreading heap of sand and a desolation, as it is to this day.

That is the story, just as I heard it long years ago. Whether things happened in the very way the story tells, whether the story is real history or parable drawn from history, I have never got to know. Either way it tells the lesson, and gives forth the counsel which the old preacher does in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. It tells of the evil of forgetting God. It makes plain to us that, sooner or later, to every life that will not remember God days come which bring no pleasure, days dark with the terror of God, when the heavens above grow black and the judgment of God breaks forth like a tempest, and everything beautiful and strong and happy in the life is overthrown, and desolation comes to house and health, and at last to life itself.

III. I knew a lad once, who in five short years passed from days in which every day was a pleasure to days in which he had no pleasure. He passed, in that short space, out of a life on which the smile of God rested to one on which His tempest fell.

Never a boy had a happier home or a better upbringing. He had godly and loving parents. His mother taught him about Christ. His father gave him a good example. And from God he had splendid health and an excellent mind. He had won many a prize at school.

By and by it was time for him to go into business, and a fine place was found for him in Glasgow. Allan was blithe to leave his school tasks and his country home, and go down into the life of the city, of which he had heard so much. He did not think of the wicked tempters among whom his lot was to be cast, nor of the weakness of his own poor heart. But his father did. 'Remember your Creator, Allan,' the old man said to him as he wrung his hands in parting. 'Oh, Allan, my son, keep the heart for Him.' The words did make an impression on the

boy. Allan himself told me, years after, that they rung in his ears for a time, and everything on the road seemed to repeat them. It was a beautiful morning in spring when he left. The buds were glimmering on the hedges like little sparks of green light. The clouds were lying in great bars across the lower part of the heavens, and all flecked and fringed with purple. The boy thought the clouds above and the hedges below took up his father's words, and said to him, 'Remember God'. The great-faced clock on the church steeple of the village where the coach stopped to change horses was pointing to nine as the driver pulled up, and at that moment the bell struck out the hour. The very strokes of the bell seemed to ring out the words, 'Keep the heart, Allan, for God'. But by this time Allan's heart was reaching away towards the great city. The thought of the new life he was to lead, and the new pleasures he was to taste, drove out every other thought, and by and by even the impression and memory of his father's words. He could think of nothing but Glasgow and its life. And there, at last, it came into view. From the shoulder of the great hill over which the coach had to pass, he beheld it lying in the morning light. Its great chimneys, like trees of a forest for number, stood up, belching out smoke. On went the coach. The last halting-place was passed, then the bridge over the Clyde, then the long suburb between the bridge and the city, and then Allan was in Glasgow. Horses, carts, crowds, shops, noises of all kinds mixed and roared together. In a moment more the coach was empty, and the poor boy was standing alone on the busy pavement.

Ah! if from that moment he had cared to recall the words of his father, and to remember God, all might have gone well with him. But he let go the words. He did not care to have God in his thoughts. He did not care to have God ruling over him. 'I am a man now,' he said; 'I can rule myself.'

Not all at once—bad ways never come all at once—but bit by bit he let go all he had been taught at home—religion, prayer, purity, honesty itself. Wicked, ungodly thoughts came into his heart, and he made them welcome. He made friendships with bad companions. He turned aside into evil ways. He began to frequent taverns and drink-saloons. He spent his nights in sin, and his days in neglect of duty. At the end of the fourth year he had lost his early fondness for the church and Bible, and he even began to think lightly of his parents and his home. Then began that darkening of the heavens which precedes a storm. Then came day after day in which he had no pleasure. Clouds appeared on the face of his employer, serious looks on the faces of his father's friends. Then came warnings which he disregarded, advices which made him angry. Then came up—more terrible than all—from the depths of his own soul, mutterings of the anger of God. At last came the storm itself. He lost the esteem of his employer. Then he lost his place. His health followed, and by and by his life.

Where the buds put out their green lights on the hedgerows to make the fifth spring since he left his home, he was lying very still under the sod in the muirland churchyard near where his father's cottage stood.

People tell me that on quiet mornings, about the hour poor Allan left his home, they still hear the clouds whispering, 'Remember God,' and even the little buds on the hedges have been heard to repeat the words. But Allan will hear them nevermore.

IV. While my mind was still filled with these recollections and visions of tempest, I happened to be in London, and went to see the Royal Academy. I saw there some pictures in which one of the ruins which that tempest works is described. And I do not think I could better describe the evil which comes into a fair young life by forgetting God than by telling the story which those pictures tell.

A gentle youth has come up to the University. You can see by his open face and by his ruddy cheeks that he has come from a home that cares for him. There is a mother there who has watched over him and prayed for him all his days. But now he is away from her care, and among young men of his own age. For them and him it is the time to remember God. I dare say, if the letters his companions and he got in the morning could be read, we should find in more than one of them the words: 'O my beloved, remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'. But neither this young man nor the companions he has taken up with are thinking of God. They are playing cards. It is midnight: one of their number, unused as yet to this life, has fallen asleep. The others are gambling. The young man whose sad story the painter has undertaken to paint is caught by this evil. He has forgotten father and mother, home and innocent days, class duty and lessons. What includes all, he has forgotten God.

In the second picture he is older, and there is not on his face the same glow of health and home life which we saw first. He is not at college now, nor where his college classes should have led him. He is at a place, the most evil for old or young, for rich or poor, for prince or peasant, to be. He is at a race-course. Coarse, brutish-looking, eager men are thrusting in their betting-books to him from the outside crowd. He does not yet know all the evil of their evil ways. He does not see yet that they are cheats and rogues, who want him to gamble his riches into their pockets. Alas! for him. And alas! for the dear mother who is praying for him. He has exchanged the innocent joys of home, and pure delights of college, for the society of chaffy idlers, and the coarse pleasures of these red-faced, shabby, vulgar men. And he is falling into their evil traps. He is writing down their tempting bets. And in his blindness he does not see that the bets he is accepting shall one day make the heavens black above him, and bring down a storm upon his head.

And too soon that storm begins to fall. In the third picture, when we next see him, several years

have passed. He is married and in a house of his own. Beside him is a beautiful wife with two young children. He is in a room filled with beautiful things. If we could fix our eyes on the room only, or go out and wander about the beautiful grounds, we should say, 'Everything here has a look of peace and happiness'. But there is neither peace nor happiness in the soul of its master. Days have come to him now in which he has no pleasure. He will nevermore have pleasure in all the days of his life that are to come. A terrible knowledge is in his soul. He has gambled away the last shilling he had. He has gambled away his beautiful home and the bread of his wife and children. He has gambled himself into debts which he will never be able to pay. And here, within the door of this beautiful room, darkening it by their shadow, between the poor young mother who cannot understand what has taken place, and the miserable father who understands too well, are two officers to take him away to prison. The tempest he has brought upon himself has burst out upon him. He gave his young life, his strong manhood, his love, his time, his money, to evil and to evil ways. He sowed the wind: he is reaping the whirlwind. It has swept joy and peace out of his life. It is about to sweep away his liberty: he must go to gaol. When he is lying in gaol, and in misery there, the same tempest will drive wife and children out of their beautiful home. Nothing will be left to them but shame and sorrow. Their life, like his, will be a ruin.

In the closing picture, the last burst of the tempest has come upon him. He has got out of gaol, but everything beautiful in his life has been destroyed. His whole life is a ruin. He is locking the door of the poor bedroom in which he sleeps. He bends eagerly to listen, turns the key gently lest his wife should hear. His baby's cradle is near, but it appeals to him in vain. A pistol is lying on the table. In another moment he will have destroyed his life with it; and his very body shall be a ruin.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 187.

## GRATITUDE

'Non immemor beneficii.'

'Forget not all His benefits.'—PSALM CIII. 2.

THIS motto belongs to a family in Ireland which has as its 'coat of arms' a baboon carrying a baby. This strange figure has a story connected with it. It is said that long ago one of the family was away at the war, and had left his household in the charge of one or two old retainers and the women servants. Suddenly there came an alarm of the enemy, and everybody fled, forgetful of the little baby, the heir of the house; but a baboon, who was the pet of the family, noticed the omission, ran to the cradle, caught up the child, and carried him to the top of the abbey steeple, holding him out for the people to see. Great was the terror of the forgetful servants, but, happily, the animal carried the child safely to the ground again. When FitzGerald, the child's father,



returned, he was grateful to the dumb animal that had saved the fortunes of his house; and was not ashamed to set the monkey in the centre of his shield of honour, and underneath to place the motto, 'Not unmindful of his kindness'. You notice how nearly these words correspond to the familiar ones of the 103rd Psalm. We are taught that we must not be forgetful of God's goodness, and that the best way to remind ourselves of it is to hold a clear recollection of the means whereby God helped us.

I. There are some quaint customs in England that show how different generations hold in affectionate remembrance the usages of an earlier time, because these remind them of the kindness of their benefactors. At Winchester School, for instance, the boys always prefer to use the simple, square platters of wood to plates of a finer and more expensive kind, because these have been handed down from generation to generation, and were the only form of dish used at the time the college was founded. The boys thus feel themselves in closer touch with the spirit and times of their founder. At Queen's College, Oxford, too, there are numerous quaint customs to keep the scholars in mind of those who in the old days founded that seat of learning, and gave their money to support all who should study within its walls.

One of the famous standards of the world was that of Constantine the Great. It was in the form of a cross, and it is said that on the eve of one of his great battles the emperor saw this sign in heaven, with the words written over it, 'In this conquer,' and made a vow that if heaven granted him on that day the victory, he would always fight under the banner of the cross and subject himself to its sovereignty.

Thus, you see, men glory in things quaint, or old, or even despised, if thereby they have been aided; and are glad to take them for the token of honour and glory. They are not ashamed of them, because for those who wear or display them they have a sacred and joyful meaning. Now, we should learn a lesson from such customs, that not only is ingratitude disgraceful, but must bring with it its own punishment.

II. I have read somewhere a fairy story that tells how once a traveller was wandering through a wood, when he came upon a clump of the little blue flowers that we call forget-me-nots. He bent over them surprised and delighted at their beauty, but wondered more when the little flowers began to speak to him. They told him that if he plucked a handful of them, and carried them on through the forest, they would disclose to him untold treasure. He eagerly snatched some of the blossoms and went hurriedly on his way. Presently he came to a rocky defile, and there right in front of him opened a doorway that led him to a cave filled with all manner of gold and precious stones. When he saw the wonderful treasure that was within his reach he rushed eagerly forward and threw away the now despised and seemingly worth-

less flowers, but in a moment the doorway closed before his eyes and he had no spell wherewith to reopen it. Thus, was he taught the sin of ingratitude and the shame of selfishness. Now, God's good gifts are like the little flowers in the forest, strewn plentifully at our feet, and if we take them with loving hands and humble hearts, remembering the Good Giver, they will open to us ever new treasure-houses, and we shall become the richer in love, in friendship, and in what is best of all, the power to help.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 56.

### THE DAISY

'As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.'—PSALM CIII, 15.

FLOWERS may bring *sad* thoughts or *happy* thoughts, and sometimes the sad thoughts change to happy ones as we go on thinking about them. When our Lord said, 'Consider the lilies,' He had a happy thought about the flowers. The Psalmist who wrote this Psalm had a sadder thought—'Flowers soon fade, so man,' but the sad thought grew bright—'Though man fade, God cannot fade—His mercy will always be sure to those who trust and fear Him.' We may take another thought from his words—a real flower of the field—what so common as the daisy! Let us see how men, how children, may be like the daisy and flourish as the daisy flourishes.

1. **The Name.**—What does daisy mean? (Day's eye.) Fields, like the face of a living creature, but not only *two* eyes, full of little twinkling eyes, eyes which open when the day dawns and close at night as the day closes. Day's eyes. What makes the eyes open? Light—sun rises and bright rays shoot out and kiss the little shut lids—they feel the kiss and open out beneath it. When the sun goes down and the light grows dim, the lids shut and the flowers sleep.

1. *An example.*

Remember verse:—

Early to bed and early to rise

Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Might add:—

And is good, too, for all little creatures with eyes.

When bedtime comes and you want to stay up longer; or getting-up time comes and you want to stay in bed longer—remember daisy—never wants to keep eyes shut after light shines, or eyes open after sunset.

2. *A parable.*

Not only eyes in our head—eyes in ourselves. [*Illustration.*—When we come to understand a thing, often say, 'I see it now!'] What sort of things should we keep these eyes open for? Things which the light shows us. And who is the light of the world? So, things which Jesus Christ shows us; other things He does not care for us to know. If we want to be like the daisy, must keep eyes—hearts—open to the light. Look out for good things. When darkness comes and bad thoughts hover about, shut

the eyes—'We are children of the Light and of the day'.

**II. The Structure.**—The daisy is, really, a whole family or school of little flowers bound up together. Look at yellow middle through a magnifying glass—each little yellow speck, a perfect flower, with five little yellow petals of its own; more than a hundred of these tiny flowers all club together to make *one* flower more beautiful than any of them.

We know proverb 'Union is strength' [cf. fable of sticks and faggots], but also true that 'Union is beauty'—perhaps when not 'beauty' it may not be 'strength' either. [Cf. Zech. xi.: 'Beauty' got broken first and then 'Bands' had to be broken]. If only we could live together as the little yellow daisy flowerets live—never hear any of them say, 'I'll never love you any more'—each in his own place, doing his own duty, happy and contented, at one with all his brothers. Remember what Psalmist says (Ps. cxxxiii.), 'Behold how good,' etc. If we want home to be like daisy, or school like daisy, then no quarrelling, jealousy, unkindness, but all 'dwelling together in unity'.

But the daisy not all yellow—what else? The little flowers clubbed together can secure *among them* this beautiful bright crown! See what St. Paul says (Eph. iv. 1, 3), 'walk worthy . . . bond of peace'; cf. Colossians iii. 14, 'above all . . . bond of perfectness' (i.e. 'perfect belt' or 'girdle'). If like the daisy flowerets we love one another, like them we have a beautiful girdle—the perfect girdle or bond of peace.

**III. Source of Health.**—What makes the daisy grow? What keeps all the little flowerets united, and the beautiful white crown-belt unbroken? The light and the air from above, the rains which cleanse it, and refresh it through the roots. So too we want, God's *Light*, God's *Spirit* (like wind), and all the other refreshing influences by which God tries to make us pure; we can only 'flourish' as this 'flower of the field' through the 'mercy of the Lord, which endureth for ever'.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 83.

### THE KING IN THE BEAUTY OF HIS KINGDOM

'His kingdom ruleth over all.'—PSALM CIII. 19.

WE have spoken of the beauty of Jesus as a King. He makes all His people good, and peaceable, and happy. And a king who really can do this for all his subjects, appears very beautiful to us. And the words of David in our present text call us to look at the *kingdom* of Jesus. He *has* a kingdom *now*. The Bible tells us that He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. And He sits there as King. 'The government is upon His shoulder.' It is easier for us to think of Jesus as a poor man than as a great King. We read of Him as 'the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'; we know that He was so poor that, 'though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet He had not

where to lay His head'. We think of Him as healing the sick, and raising the dead, and working many miracles as 'He went about doing good'. All this is easy for us to think about; but it is not so easy for us to think about Jesus as having a great kingdom; yet this is what we must now try to do.

When we hear people talking about governments, or kingdoms, we are very apt to think, 'Well, these are not things that are of any importance to us as children. Men and women may attend to these things; but they are not for *us* to think of, or care much about'. Well, if it were the kingdom of England, or the government of France, or Germany, or Russia, or China, that we were talking about, then it would be true. We, as children, would have no interest in those kingdoms or governments. It would make very little difference to us whether those kingdoms were good or bad. But when we come to talk about the kingdom that Jesus has, it is very different. We are all interested in this kingdom. It has something to do with every one of us. From the oldest scholar in one of our Bible classes, down to the youngest scholar in the infant school, we should all wish to know about this kingdom. This kingdom has a great deal to do with every one of us. We should all try to find out what sort of a kingdom it is. And this is what we wish now to speak of. I want to show that there is great beauty in the kingdom of Jesus. This is our subject now: *The beauty of Christ's kingdom*.

There are *three* reasons why it is beautiful.

**I. In the First Place, the Kingdom of Jesus is a Beautiful Kingdom because it Rules Over 'All the Greatest Things'.**—One of the greatest things that we know of is this world that we live on. If we could take a line, and go all round the outside of the world, and measure it, we should find that line about twenty-four thousand miles long. If we could bore a hole, right through the earth, from just where we stand to the other side of it, and then drop a line through, we should find that line—measuring the diameter of the earth—would be about eight thousand miles in length. This vast world is full of rocks, and sand, and earth, and water. How big this world is! How hard it must be to move it! Why, if the world should stand still, all the men that ever lived, with all the horses to help them, and all the steam engines ever made, if they were all put together, could not move the world a single inch; no, nor the hundredth part of an inch. But Jesus, in His beautiful kingdom, moves this great world a great deal easier than you or I can bend our little finger.

A vessel was at sea in a terrible storm some time ago. The captain gave up all hope of being able to save the ship, and told the passengers to prepare for the worst. Some were crying aloud and wringing their hands; others were calling upon God to save them. Among these was a Christian man who remained perfectly calm.

'How can you be so quiet in the midst of this fearful storm?' asked one of his fellow-passengers.

'My Father in heaven is ruling this storm,' said the Christian. 'He can keep the vessel from sinking if He sees best. If I sink, I shall still be in my Father's hand. I know I am safe there. Why should I be afraid?'

That was the right use to make of the subject we are now talking about. The kingdom of Jesus is a beautiful kingdom, because it rules over all the greatest things.

**II. But the Kingdom of Jesus is a Beautiful Kingdom, in the Second Place, because it Rules Over 'All the Smallest Things'.—**On the one hand, nothing is so great that He is unable to manage it; and on the other hand, nothing is so little that He ever loses sight of it. He can put His hand of power on great worlds, and suns, and oceans, and rivers, and winds, and storms, and make them do just what He wishes them to do. And at the same time He makes use of the little rays of light, and the little grains of sand, to work for Him too. What a little thing a drop of water is! How tiny it seems, as it hangs on the tip of your finger! And yet, when God wished to form the mighty ocean, He made use of those tiny little drops for this purpose. What a little thing the pebble stone was that David put into his sling when he went forth to fight that great giant of Gath! Yet God did more for Israel by that little pebble than by all the thousands of swords and spears in the army of King Saul. What a little thing a coral insect is! And yet God makes use of that tiny insect to do what all the great whales in the ocean never could do—build up the coral islands from the bottom of the ocean.

**III. Jesus not only Rules Over all the Greatest Things, and all the Smallest Things, but He 'Rules them at all Times, and in all Places'.—**The Bible is full of illustrations of the way in which this kingdom is ruling all things, at all times, and in all places. It was this which kept Noah safe while the world was drowning. It was this which kept Lot safe while the storm of fire was burning up Sodom and Gomorrah. It was this which kept Joseph safe, although his brethren had made up their minds to kill him. It was this which kept Moses safe in Egypt, though Pharaoh was very angry with him, and would have killed him if he could. It was this which kept David safe, though Saul was hunting him with an army of three thousand men, all up and down the land, and trying for years to destroy him. It was this which kept Daniel safe in the den of lions, and his three friends when Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the burning fiery furnace. And when Jonah was carried by the great fish down to the lowest depths of the ocean, it was this 'kingdom ruling over all,' which preserved him there, and brought him safe back to land and to his home again.

And in just the same way this kingdom, as it rules over all things, is preserving people now. Here is an illustration.

Some time ago a clergyman from New Haven was on a visit to Boston during the winter. He was

stopping at the Marlborough Hotel, and was sitting in his room writing a lecture that he was going to deliver. A very severe gale was blowing that day. He stopped in his writing, being at a loss for a word. He clasped his hands over his head, and tilted his chair back, while meditating about the word he wished to make use of. Just while he was doing this the storm blew down the chimney, and a great mass of bricks and mortar came tearing through the roof and the ceiling, and crushed the table on which he had been writing. If he had not leaned back on his chair at that very moment he would have been killed instantly. The hole made in the roof was from ten to fourteen feet in width. What was it which led this minister to lean back, at that moment, and so to save his life? It was not an accident or chance that happened to him. In a world where God is always present, everywhere, there can be no such thing as accident or chance. Nothing merely happens. Everything is known, and ordered, or allowed. Jesus, whose 'kingdom ruleth over all,' was in the room with that minister. It was one of His angels who led him to tip back his chair, and thus to save his life.

And when we think of Jesus as ruling all the greatest things, and all the smallest things, in all places, and at all times, then it may well be said that we are 'seeing the King' in the beauty of His kingdom.

If we have Jesus for our friend it will always be a help and comfort to us to think how 'His kingdom ruleth over all'.—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 51.

#### CEDARS

'The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted.'—PSALM CIV. 16.

THERE is a reference here to special trees, one kind being mentioned, 'the cedars of Lebanon'. The cedars belong to a family of very valuable trees—namely, the pine family. I believe, in common with many others, that the reference in the first part of this verse is to the different varieties of pine-trees which flourished at the time in Palestine. In the latter part of this verse there is special mention of the cedar as the finest specimen. There is a very special meaning in these words: 'The trees of the Lord are full of sap, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted'. The pine-trees are the oldest kind of trees of which we know. Geologists go down deep among the rocks, and they find that the earliest specimen of tree life is that of the pine, buried deep in the earth, and at length forming a part of the rock for ever. So that in that sense the Psalmist might well call the cedars specially, and pines in general, 'the trees of the Lord'. The good old Hebrew prophets and Psalmists, when they saw anything specially grand or imposing or beautiful in Nature, used to say, 'It is the Lord's'. If a great mountain was bigger than any other, they exclaimed, 'It is the Mount of the Lord'. And so with regard



to everything that impressed them above other things in Nature. If anything was more venerable or ancient than other things, the Jews at once called it God's. On this ground the pines specially deserved the honourable name of 'the trees of the Lord'.

The pines, especially the cedars, are *vigorous* and luxuriant, growing on bleak mountains and barren heights where no other tree can stand the fierce gale. There, upon the rock where there is only shallow soil—a few feet, at most, of earth—in which other trees could not find place for their roots, as most send their roots downwards, the pine-trees, and especially the cedars, spread their roots along the shallow surface of earth, forming knots so as more firmly to grasp the soil; and thus reach out to the roots of other trees, and embrace each other, so that not one shall fall without the others. The cedars have a sort of confederacy; they are always looking out for each other's roots, in order that they may join hands and be able to resist the force of the mighty gale, shallow as the earth may be where they grow. Ah! when the Psalmist thought of those cedars and fir-trees of Lebanon growing luxuriantly on shallow soil, upon mountain slopes and summits, he concluded, 'It is the Lord who has planted these'. They would not grow there if they had not been of His planting. He has provided for their growth, where no other tree can flourish. The trees of the Lord 'are full'—of *sap* is added by the translators. It may mean that; or it may mean 'full of life,' 'full of strength,' 'full of everything that makes a tree'. 'The trees of the Lord are full of strength, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted.'

The trees of the Lord are a *great blessing*, because, growing as they do high on the heights of Lebanon, they tap the clouds, and bring down the moisture, so that every brook in the land, and especially the River Jordan, may be supplied with water. Why is Palestine to-day such a barren country in comparison with what it was? Travellers tell us they are disappointed: some of the loveliest plains of ancient days are by no means as lovely now. Why? The cedars of Lebanon have been cut down, and only a group of trees—about four hundred—remain, chiefly in one of the hollows. The ancient trees that used to cover the slopes and summit of Lebanon touched the clouds, and the moisture used to condense on the branches and drop down, and every drop helped the others, and they went together, until at last they became a rill, and the rill a brook, and the brook a river; and thus the plains were abundantly supplied with moisture. God planted these trees in Lebanon to make Palestine a rich and fertile land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Thus they were useful trees: they did not live for themselves, but brought down the blessings of heaven for others. Now the trees of the Lord which did this were full of sap themselves. There was no tree more beautiful, no tree higher and broader and more luxuriant, than the cedar of Lebanon. So, too, if you are useful you will not be

poverty-stricken yourselves; you will be blessed to the extent that you bless others. He that waters is watered. There are some people who think that if they had only been born in better circumstances their lives would be very much better and richer. According to that principle there would be plenty of trees down in the valleys very much more beautiful and rich than the cedar. But no! The cedar, though planted high up and exposed to the storms, is a strong, luxuriant, and beautiful thing. I have seen some human lives nourished amid wealth and luxury, and receiving everything that the earth could give, and yet they were miserable and poverty-stricken. On the other hand, I have seen some splendid characters in great trials; lives constantly exposed to storms and dangers. They were planted by the Lord's own hand; yet He let the storms of life beat upon them so that many a one was tempted to exclaim, 'Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious?' No! No!! No!!! He who let the four winds of heaven blow upon the cedars of Lebanon, allows the winds of trial to blow upon some of His favourite ones, and for the same reason—namely, that every storm will add to their strength and beauty. Now the cedar did not cease to be useful when it fell. When cut down it was used for God's house. Some of the most beautiful furniture, or the most important parts of the Temple, was made of cedar, so that to the last the cedar was associated with the God who planted it. God grant that we may be as useful, as strong, as flourishing, and as beautiful in life as the trees of the Lord, so full of sap, and when our service here is over may we form a part of His heavenly Temple, where He will dwell for ever.—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children* (6th Series), p. 21.

### THE DEW OF OUR YOUTH

'Thou hast the dew of thy youth.'—PSALM CX. 3.

It is very pleasant to get up early on a summer's morning and to go out into the fields, and see how every little blade of grass, and every little flower has been dressing itself in the night with pearls and diamonds.

I wonder whether you know how 'the dew' is made. It does not come down from the clouds. I will explain it to you.

There is a great deal of moisture in the air. When the air is warm you do not know it; but when, at night, everything gets cold—when the little blades of grass get cold, and the leaves get cold—then, getting cold, it makes the little moistures in the air all come together: it is called condensing it; and because it all gets cold and the little drops come together, then they cover the little leaves and blades of grass, just as you see it in the 'dew'.

And the hotter the day has been, the hotter the leaves and the grass become; and therefore they send out more heat: it is like a cold stream; and that makes more 'dew,' and therefore the hotter the day has been, the more is 'the dew'. This is very

kind of God, because when the day has been very hot we want more 'dew'.

And in very hot countries, where the Bible was written, 'the dew' is more valuable than in England. I do not know what they would do without 'the dew'. So that when Isaac was blessing Jacob (if you like you can look at it in the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis), he said to him, 'God give thee the "dew" of heaven,' because it was a great blessing. And in the twenty-ninth chapter of Job he says, when describing how happy he once was, 'the dew lay all night upon my branch'. When David was grieving over the mountains of Gilboa, because Saul and Jonathan died there, he said, 'Let there be no dew upon the mountains of Gilboa'.

Well, now, what does it mean? That children have 'dew'. 'Thou hast the dew of thy youth.' Can you think what it means? Are children happier than other people? Have children some blessings that other people have not?

I want to tell you about one thing—I do not know whether you ever thought of it—I do not think all of you have. It is rather difficult. Will you try to understand it?

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden, God said that because they had eaten that 'fruit' which they ought not to have done, for it was sinful to eat it, that all their children to the end of the world—everybody that was ever born into the world—should die, should be punished. Was not that hard? Does it not seem rather hard, because Adam and Eve did wrong, every boy and girl in the world should be punished? I think it does.

And it would be very hard if it were not for something else. God also said that, because Jesus Christ died, every boy and girl born into the world should be forgiven. That is what I want you to think of. Every boy and girl that is ever born into the world is forgiven for Christ's sake. It says so in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. There is a great deal about it in that chapter. One verse is this: 'As by the offence of one,' i.e. by Adam's sin—'judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation'—i.e. everybody that ever was born should be condemned—'even so,' God says, 'by the righteousness of one'—i.e. by the death of Jesus Christ, by what Jesus Christ has done for us—'by the righteousness of one, the free gift'—i.e. life from heaven—'came upon *all men* unto justification of life'—i.e. they should be forgiven. Therefore, every little baby that is born into the world is forgiven, when it is a little baby, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

There are two things I wish you to think of: one is that because Jesus Christ died you were forgiven all Adam had done; and when you came into this world, though you brought with you a wicked heart, yet God forgave you, and God said you should live; and if you had died then, you would have gone to heaven; and God has given you the Holy Spirit, and you have the Holy Spirit drawing your heart, and saying little things to you in your heart to do

you good. Do not you know that you have? Do not you feel that you have? Do not you hear the little voices? Have you not felt the little cords all pulling you? 'Thou hast the dew of thy youth!'

Now I am going to tell you three things which show whether we have 'the dew of our youth'. Four things there will always be if we have 'the dew of our youth,' i.e. if we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The first thing I am going to say is, that wherever the Holy Spirit is with us, and we have 'the dew of our youth,' we have soft feelings—very tender, soft feelings. Don't you ever be ashamed of having soft feelings. I am sorry to say that sometimes boys and girls laugh at others if they have soft feelings. I have seen boys and girls laugh at others if they blush or cry about something; if they have tender feelings. Do not be ashamed to have soft feelings.

I wish we were all like a particular kind of rock, called the 'red sandstone'. I should like to tell you a little about it. The red sandstone is a very hard rock. If you were to go now into Devonshire, where there is a great deal of it, you would find a hard red rock; but if you were to look at that rock in some places you would see the marks of rain on the stone; and not only so, but you could tell which way the wind blew, causing the rain to trickle down the rock in a slanting position. Ages ago, hundreds of years ago, that rain made those little marks on the sandstone. When it was very soft those marks were made; and they have all lasted. I wonder whether your soft feelings will last. Pray for soft feelings. If God gives you a soft feeling, pray Him to keep it there. It is a precious thing to have soft feelings.

I will tell you another thing. Have very simple thoughts. Do you like simple thoughts? Christ does. He tells us we must be 'like little children'. Let me tell you what I mean.

There was once a boy, and a boy much older than himself said to him one day, 'I have something to tell you. It is very funny, but you must not tell, it is a secret.' The little boy said, 'I won't tell anybody except my mother'. The big boy said, 'You must not tell your mother'. He said, 'Oh yes, I must. I have made it a rule never to hear anything which I cannot tell my mother.'

Oh! I wish you would make a rule—'never to hear anything which you cannot tell your mother'. I believe it would save many a boy from what brings bitter consequences to him if he would make that rule with all his schoolfellows—aye, and every girl too—I will listen to no conversation, I will hear nothing which I cannot go and tell my mother'. Will you make this rule? It is a very simple thought; but because it is simple it is so very nice.

I believe if you would make that rule you would have 'the dew of your youth'. 'I will hear nothing which I cannot tell my mother.'

Another sign there will be if you have 'the dew of your youth'; it is this, when you have done wrong

you will be very unhappy about it, that is, you will have deep convictions of sin—your heart will prick you, and you will feel very sad that ever you have been left to do anything wrong.

You know we all do some things that are wrong; we can hardly help it; but the mark of a Christian is that he feels he has done wrong, and he cannot be happy till he is forgiven.

There is one more thing, if you have 'the dew of your youth' you will have good impressions—something will seem to speak to you in your heart and draw you towards what is good. Do you feel it? Is there something in your heart telling you and drawing you, and saying, 'Now be a Christian, now begin to love God, now begin to pray more, to love more'. Do you feel it? It is the Holy Spirit.

I will tell you about two little boys, and their names were Edward and Richard. They slept together in the same bed. They were little boys. When they had been undressed by their mother and were getting into bed, Edward said, 'Mother, we have not said our prayers'. His mother said, 'Never mind, Edward, I will hear you say your prayers in the morning'. Little Edward said, 'Oh! no, mamma, please let me say my prayers'. His mother was just going to do so, but she had company downstairs, and she said, 'I am in a great hurry, I cannot stop'. And the mother went downstairs without hearing her little boy say his prayers. So little Edward jumped into bed.

After being there a little while he said, 'Richard, I wish nurse was at home'. 'Why, Edward?' said he. 'Because we could say our prayers with nurse.' Richard said, 'But nurse is out'. 'Well, Richard, will you get out of bed with me, and we'll say our prayers?' Richard said, 'No; it is quite dark'. 'Never mind the dark,' said Edward, 'we can hold one another's hands, and God can hear in the dark just the same. Let us get out of bed and say our prayers.' Richard said, 'No, not now; it is very cold'. 'Never mind the cold,' said little Edward, 'we shall be in bed again in two or three minutes.' Richard said, 'No, I can't; I won't'.

Presently little Richard heard a rustling in the room, and he said, 'Edward, where are you?' 'I am only at the bedside.' 'What are you doing?' 'I am saying my prayers, for myself and for you.' About five minutes passed, and little Edward went to bed again; and when his feet touched Richard's he said, 'Oh! how cold you are'. He said, 'Never mind; I am much happier. I should not have thought myself safe all night if I had not said my prayers. I am quite happy. I should be happy if I died to-night—should you, Richard?' 'No; I should not be happy if I died to-night,' said Richard. Little Edward said, 'I should—for I know I love God, and God loves me'. Richard said, 'I should not like to die, because I should have no more play'. 'Oh yes,' said Edward, 'we should play with the angels—play amongst the stars. You will have plenty of play in heaven.' Again Richard said, 'I

should not like to die'. 'Very well,' said Edward, 'but I should.'

And do you know little Edward never left that bed alive? In the morning he was very ill; and in a few days he went to heaven so happy. The same kind Spirit that made him get out of bed to say his prayers made him so happy when dying. Now he is in heaven. He had good impressions.

Those are things showing we have 'the dew of our youth'; soft feelings, simple thoughts, feeling our sins very much, and having good desires, good impressions in our hearts.

And now take care, for you know 'the dew' very quickly goes. Will you turn to the sixth of Hosea and read the fourth verse: 'O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.'

What keeps 'the dew' on the ground? Where does 'the dew' stay—out in the glare, or in the shade? Does not 'the dew' stay in the shade? Then you must live in the shade if you would keep your 'dew'.

Do you know what I mean by 'living in the shade'? It is not a thing (I am sorry to say) that boys and girls do nowadays. I think that it is a sad thing that boys and girls, long before they are men and women, want to get out of the shade—want to be in public—to be men and women before they are so. And perhaps you will hardly like me to say it, but I do not think that boys and girls, wishing to be thought men and women before their time, will keep their 'dew'. It always goes away. I advise you to keep 'the dew'. Keep in the shade. Be a little violet; it is better than the sunflower; you will seem much prettier, and be much happier. Violets live in the shade. Keep 'the dew'. Everybody will love you more. You will be more useful.

Let me tell you another thing. If you wish to keep 'the dew of your youth,' i.e. to keep a happy Christian spirit—to have God's Holy Spirit with you—you must often be alone. Do you remember in the sixteenth of Exodus we read that when 'the dew' came on the ground, then they found 'the manna'; they never found 'the manna' without 'the dew'. Now what is 'the manna'? Truth—the Bible—Christ. You must go with 'the dew' of the Spirit; with the Spirit of God with you, you must get 'manna'. You must read your Bible—you must think about Christ—you must feed your soul upon Christ and then you will keep 'the dew'.

In one of the galleries of the Louvre, in Paris, there are two pictures side by side. I don't know whether you know those two pictures. I will just tell you a little about them, then you will understand how they explain the text, what it is to have 'the dew of our youth'.

Many years ago there was a great painter in Paris and he wanted to paint a most beautiful child, and he inquired for the most lovely baby to be found in Paris. At last he found a beautiful little creature;



his countenance was full of intelligence and beauty, and he painted it.

Many years after that he thought he should like to paint the opposite, he wanted to paint a horrid old man, the worst to be found; at last he was guided to a prison, to the Bastille, and there was a grim, frowning, unhappy, horrible looking old man in his chains; he was the picture of all that was horrid, abominable, and wretched. He painted it. After he had painted it he began to talk to him, and he found out that this old man was the same person that he had painted, when an infant, sixty years previously and that he was the most beautiful child to be found in Paris; but now he was the most horrid old man to be found, and he was condemned, for some great crime, to spend the rest of his years in the Bastille. He had lost the 'dew of his youth!—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### A FIXED HEART

'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'—PSALM CXII. 7.

*INTRODUCTION.*—[This may be used with effect in any address taken from the acrostic Psalms.] Some boys and girls learn hymns—rhyme helps them. Jew boys and girls used to do the same more than 2000 years ago. What we call 'Book of Psalms' their hymn book. No rhymes; but some hymns easy to learn, because the lines put in alphabetical order, first line, or set of lines, begins with A, second with B, and so on. This CXII. Psalm one of these easy hymns, cf. CXI., CXIX., etc. Our text would be remembered as the lines beginning with M and N. See what it tells about:—

1. A Man whose Heart is Fixed.—As we say, 'made up his mind'.

1. People without fixed hearts, who could not make up their minds—

*Reuben*, Genesis xxxvii. 22, etc., cf. xlii. 22. He spoke, but he did not act, though he was the eldest, cf. xlix. 4.

*Orpah*, Ruth i. 14.

2. People who had fixed hearts—

*Jacob* made up his mind to get the blessing. *Solomon* to be wise, a good judge.

*Ruth* to help her mother-in-law, not leave her—she 'clave unto her'—to be as useful as she could be.

You perhaps have made up your mind, e.g. to get all the marks you can—so get prize, etc.

II. What came of its being Fixed.—'Not afraid of evil tidings.'

But some people, with hearts fixed, would be very much afraid of evil tidings, e.g. :—

1. Man made up his mind to get a fortune—not quite well—doctor, 'Can't live'—a fixed heart makes him more afraid.

2. You to have a holiday; working for it—heart fixed—very much afraid if it looks rainy the night before.

Why did not this man fear?

III. Where his Heart was Fixed.—Even more

important than being fixed. 'Trusting in the Lord.' [Ship in storm anchored to floating island. Good to be anchored; but if the anchorage shifts, what then?] cf. Matthew vi. 19-21.

Illustrate from fittings of a ship's cabin—lamps, glasses, etc., not fixed below, but hung from above; so when ship rolls they do not roll with ship, but hang steady. Apply, cf. Colossians iii. 2.

*Recapitulate.*—Fixed heart a good thing, but more important where it is fixed. Where is your heart fixed? [cf. Collect for Fourth Sunday after Easter].—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 119.

### THE NOSE-GATE

'Noses have they but they smell not.'—PSALM CXV. 6.

'Let my prayer be set before you as incense.'—PSALM CXLI. 2.

'I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.'—AMOS v. 21.

I AM sure I shall surprise you by telling you the first thing the nose suggests. It is—

1. Prayer.—How can that be, you say? Well, you all know what a sacrifice is in the Old Testament sense. It was an offering laid upon a heap of stones and burned, and as the smoke of it rose up to the heavens and was lost, so the one who made the offering thought that it had gone up to God Himself who would feel the smell of the offering and listen to the prayer that lay behind it. You remember the case of Cain and Abel. God accepted the offering of Abel; He refused Cain's. In Dore's picture of this incident we see the smoke, and therefore the smell of Abel's sacrifice, rising straight up to heaven where God 'smelled it as a sweet savour'; while on Cain's altar the smoke is shown driven down as if by a strong wind to the earth, signifying that God had rejected it. This method of sacrifice was man's way of approaching God, and God accepted it as a token of man's desire to be in touch with him.

Then, in later times, when God was worshipped, not in the open air only, but in temples built to His honour, we find a sweet smelling smoke called 'Incense' used in worship, and, it may be, that this took the place of the old sacrifice in the later days of the Church's worship. In the Jewish Temple, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to pray for the people he always carried with him the 'censer,' a round metal case in which incense was burned, and as he swung it before the Mercy Seat the clouds of it rose into the air, a vivid symbol of the prayers that were being offered up to God. And so we can understand now the beautiful words of David, 'Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice'. We can now see the connection in St. Paul's words to the Philippians when he speaks of 'an odour of a sweet smell, acceptable, well-pleasing to God'. And we can get a deeper glimpse into the meaning of the strange words of the book of Revelation 'And an angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the

saints, upon the golden altar which was before the Throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.' And again, in another place, we have the significant words, 'Golden vials, full of odours which are the prayers of the saints'. It is evident, then, that this sweet-smelling incense has long been associated in the Church, and in worship, with the idea of prayer.

II. The second lesson that comes to us through the Nose-gate is that of **The Power of Influence**.—What is influence? A Persian poet tells how a lump of clay was discovered to have clinging about it the beautiful, delicate perfume of the rose, and being asked where it got this fragrant smell that so transformed it, it replied that all night it had been lying close-pressed to a rose. The rose we say influenced the clay. That ugly lump was changed because it had come in contact for a few hours with the sweet, beautiful rose. Nothing clings to one so readily as a smell. It is all right if the smell is good, but if it is bad it is all wrong, and you cannot go near a good or bad smell without carrying it away with you so that others notice it. There are some trades that cannot be hid. You can tell where some men are employed by the very smell of their clothes. I remember at college, for weeks after the beginning of the session, one could tell that certain students came from the Highlands by the odour of the peat that clung to their clothes.

We all have an influence that lies round us just like an odour, and it affects all we come in contact with for good or evil. You cannot be in bad company without this influence affecting you. This truth has found a place in one of the idioms of our language. When we hear it said that so-and-so is 'in bad odour' it means that the one in question has done or said something which has so displeased his friends that they keep him at arm's length, as if there were something unpleasant about his very presence. We cannot come in contact with evil and sin ourselves without catching this 'bad odour'. To put it bluntly, it will cling to us like a bad smell.

Long ago, in the times of the Puritans in England, a boy named Sibbes was won to the side of Christ by the quiet influence of a godly mother. When he grew up to be a man he wrote a little book called *The Bruised Reed*. Some years afterwards a pedlar gave a copy of this book to a young man, requesting him at the same time to read it carefully and pray over it. The young man, struck by the strangeness of the gift and the request, did so, and it was the means of bringing him to Christ. That young man became the famous Richard Baxter, and the outcome of that chance gift of the pedlar was, among other works, Baxter's world-renowned *Saints Rest*. This book was the means of winning many to Christ, and among them Philip Doddridge. He in turn wrote an almost equally famous book called *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, and what this land of ours and the world at large owes to it, only Eternity can tell. One of those

converted by its means was Wilberforce, who wrote the most notable religious book of his day, his *Practical View of Christianity*. To this book Thomas Chalmers, the great leader of the Free Church in Scotland, owed his finding of the light of the knowledge of God, and the Church he helped to establish is but another outcome of the quiet saintly influence of that mother who lived so long ago in Puritan England, and of the little boy she trained so well for the service of Christ. I am sure that these two, mother and son, never dreamed that such a vast number of men and women would, from its human side, owe to them what they held dearest in the world.

III. Finally, it is a well-known fact that smell has a wonderful way of opening the doors of Memory. In the language of science we say it is strong in the power of Association.

Young people will all realise this more fully as they grow older. Some day, years hence, when they have left their quiet country homes where they spent the happy days of childhood, and live now in the noise and dust and grime of some great city, a 'whiff' of violets may come to them from some florist's shop in the heart of the city, or a passing cart may bring to them the scent of the new-mown hay. At once the memory of the old days will come back to them—the fragrant woods with their green and mossy banks, and the shy violets peeping from the ground; the open, wind-swept fields, with the scented grass and the waving, golden corn; and over all the deep, soft blue of God's own heaven, clear, warm, sunny. And it may be, as the floodgates of memory open and the old associations come home to the heart, the tears will start to their eyes as they sigh for the cleaner, happier life that once was theirs. Ah, yes! What memories rise at the call of a mere odour! Dr. Hugh Macmillan tells us how, as a boy, he used to go through a wood thick with wild geraniums on his way to school, and he says: 'I cannot feel the smell of this common weed for a moment without that wood and all those happy memories of my school life coming back with the utmost vividness to my mind'.

What is the plain lesson for us here? Never to do or say anything that will bring us, however raised, memories that may haunt us in the coming days with unavailing regret, with bitter sorrow, with hopeless tears. It is now that we are making the memories of the future years. We are doing now the things that make us what we are and what we will become. Whatever we may be able to change in our life, one thing we never can change—our memories. As Pilate said, so must we all say, 'What I have written I have written'. We cannot go back over it like a page of a copy-book and wipe out the stain that may have come on our life. It is there behind us as part of a past that cannot be altered.

The moving finger writes; and having writ  
 Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit  
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,  
 Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

If we have sinned, the memory of that sin can never leave us, and it may be that some sweet odour of the country will bring it all back again, and we realise that our memories cannot alter. Will we not then take this solemn lesson to heart, and try and have such things in our past to look back upon as shall only bring us peace and joy and, above all, gratitude to the Good Father of all, who alone can give to His own children happy memories.—J. THOMSON, *The Six Gates*, p. 69.

### ON CLEANSING OUR WAYS

'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.'—PSALM CXIX. 9.

WHEN the Psalmist speaks of our *way*, then, he means our *way of life*, the way in which we spend our days, the way in which we occupy ourselves from morning to night, and from year to year. And when he speaks of *cleansing* our way he implies that at some points, at least, our way has led us through the mire. The picture in his mind was of this sort. There stood before him a young man who had not long set out on the journey of life; and who yet, to his own deep surprise and disgust, found many stains of travel already upon him. He had not meant to go wrong; as yet, perhaps, he has not gone very far wrong. And yet where did all this filth come from? And how is it to be got rid of? And if, at the very outset of the journey, he has wandered into bypaths which have left these ugly stains upon him, what will he be like when he reaches the end of his journey? How can he hope to keep a right course and to present himself, without spot, before God at the last? In short, how is he to make his way clean and to keep it clean?

It is not a bad sign, but a sign of good that you should be asking this question, asking it seriously, or even sorrowfully. For it shows at least that you know your own weakness, and want to be strong; it shows that you know your own danger, and want to be saved from it. Nor is it a bad omen, it is a good omen that you should despair of yourselves; for that may lead you, and ought to lead you, to trust in a Power and a Goodness higher than your own. If you were content with yourselves I, for one, should begin to despair of you: for who can habitually look up to that Pattern of all excellence, the Perfect Son of Man, without seeing how sadly, and in how many ways he falls short of it? I hope, therefore, that many of you are seriously, if not sorrowfully, asking yourselves, How may we cleanse our ways and keep them clean?

And if you are asking that question at all seriously you will, I am sure, listen with attention and interest to what any wise and good man, who has had a large experience of life, has to say in reply to it—listen with special interest and attention to what any man inspired by God has to say to it. The inspired Psalmist offers you two answers to that question which I will ask you to consider. When we go to him and ask, 'How may we cleanse our ways?' he replies, first,

'By taking heed thereto'; and then, 'By taking heed thereto according to God's word'.

I. If we are to make our life pure, noble, satisfying we are to *take heed* to it, i.e. we are to *think* about it, and to force ourselves to walk according to our best thoughts and aims. How wise an answer that is you may see when I tell you that one of the greatest of living Englishmen sums up the whole teaching of the wisest German of the present century in the brief citation: '*Gedenke, zu leben*'. I quote Goethe's very words because I am speaking to you young men and women who, many of you, know what they mean. But for the sake of others I must add that '*Gedenke, zu leben*' means literally, 'Think, to live'. Carlyle translates, 'Think of living'. But you will all get hold of its meaning if I say that what it really comes to is this: 'If you would live rightly and well, you must *think*—think how it is best to live'. So that you see two of the wisest men of our own time are of one mind with the Psalmist who lived between two and three thousand years before them. He says, 'If you would walk in pure and noble ways of life, *think* of your ways'; and they say, 'Would you live well, *think* how to live'.

II. But this is not the whole of the Psalmist's answer. There is a second part to it; and we cannot do justice even to the first part of it till we have glanced at the second. For, though it is well to *think* of living, to think is not enough. We want a high and true standard to which to refer, by which we may measure and direct our thoughts. And this standard the Psalmist gives us when he tells us to take heed to our ways *according to the Word of God*.

Many a man has thought of living, thought about what he would do with his life, and has been true to his thoughts, only to find himself sticking helplessly in the yellow dirt which we call 'money'. Not that I have a word to say against money in its proper place. On the contrary I have a great, though *distant*, respect for it; for very little of it has ever come my way. And no young man starting in life, and longing to keep his way clean, can be too sure of this; that he ought to do his best to secure a sufficient provision for himself and for those who may hereafter be dependent on him. Every man needs a certain amount of money to make him independent, to save him from being a burden on others, to lift him out of the reach of sordid and fretting cares, to set him free to take the path of study or action he finds most congenial and profitable, to enable him to lend and do good. The great charm of wealth—if by 'wealth' we mean a modest but secure provision for all reasonable needs—is that it sets a man free to serve his neighbours *for nothing*. That, indeed, is what God gives it to us for, if He does give it.

But while wealth is a capital servant it is a brutal master. And it is perilously apt to become the master of any man who makes it his chief aim *even for a time*. 'Dirt,' according to Lord Palmerston, 'is only matter in the wrong place'. And money



becomes 'dirt' when we suffer it to get into the wrong place. And it does get into the wrong place when it gets into the chief place.

You want to make your life clean—i.e. pure, bright, beautiful—and to keep it clean. If, then, you are conscious that you have already contracted some stains, some pollutions, by wandering in sinful and miry ways, the Divine Word bids you repent, bids you go to God your Father, and, humbly confessing your sins, trust in His love for cleansing and forgiveness. It shows you that you *may* trust in His forgiving love; for it shows you how, in His love, He had foreseen your sins, and made a Sacrifice to take away your sins, and the sin of the whole world. You may well trust in that love then. And if you do trust in it, it will cleanse you from all your stains.

And now, being cleansed, you want to *keep* clean. How are you to do that? Not by neglecting your daily work, but by doing it as for God, i.e. by doing it as God would have you do it, by doing it in a faithful, generous, and kindly spirit; by using your gains for good and noble ends, for your neighbour's good as well as for your own; by renouncing any gain which you can only get through cheating or injuring a neighbour: by making men feel that they can trust you, and depend on you, because you love God and walk by His will.

To walk in a clean way, i.e. to live a pure, bright, religious life, you will not need to renounce even your games, sports, amusements, or to go into them with only half a heart, as if you thought them 'unworthy of an immortal creature'. You will need, rather, to remember that you are mortal as well as immortal, and that health of body tends to health of soul. You will rather aim to take *God* into all your pleasures and amusements, i.e. to keep them pure, and fresh, and innocent; to pursue them in a generous and considerate temper; to study how your playmates and companions may have their full share of the amusement in hand; and to shun all amusements that are injurious to health, or that excite greedy and selfish passions, or that lead you into bad company or bad habits.

If you would walk in clean ways walk by the Word of God, you will not need to abate your ardour for self-culture. You will try, rather, to learn as much as you can, to accomplish yourselves as variously as you can; to lay hold with both hands of that Wisdom which the wisest of men declared to be a veritable tree of life to all that laid hold upon her: but your motive will be—not simply your own culture or advancement, but—a strong and sincere desire to teach and serve your fellows, to make the best use of the gifts which God has bestowed upon you, to fit yourselves for heaven as well as for earth, for eternity as well as for time, for the service of God as well as for the service of man.

If you would walk in clean paths by the Word of God you will not cease from, you will not relax your efforts to win the respect and goodwill of your neighbours; you will be more than ever bent on

securing it in all dutiful and honourable ways. But you will seek to gain influence with them, not that you may get your own way with them and make them serve your will or subserve your personal interests; but that you may help to guide and confirm them in ways that are good, good for *them*, as well as for you.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 131.

### THINGS I WILL DO

'I will run the way of Thy commandments.'—PSALM CXIX. 32.

THERE was a very good old man who lived a long time ago, and I will tell you what he did. He took a wine glass, and he broke off the bottom of it, and then it could not stand, could it? It could not stand on its stem. And he laid it upon his study table, and round the wine glass he wrote the words, '*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!*' So the wine glass without a stem, that could not stand without being 'held up', reminded the good old man, all day long, sitting in his study, that he could not stand alone. 'Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.' 'Keep me, and I will keep Thee.'

You promised you would 'keep God's holy will and *commandments*'. What are they? Can you tell me? God's 'will' is the 'commandment' that He has not written; God's 'commandment' is God's 'will' that He has written. 'Commandment' is *written* 'will': 'will' is *unwritten* 'commandment'. God's 'will' is what we know God would wish us to do, though He has not said it; God's 'commandment' is what He has told us to do.

A 'commandment' is a very blessed thing. A lady has written a book in which she says, 'I like a commandment better than a promise, because every commandment has a promise inside it, whether written or not'. Then God's 'will' is a blessed thing. To find out what our heavenly Father wishes us to do, and all day long thinking—'Would God wish me to do this? It is not commanded. But would He wish me to do it?' I do not know that God has told me to preach to you this afternoon. He told Peter to do so; but He has not told me. It is God's 'will', though not His 'commandment'.

It is God's 'will' that you should be *happy*. Can you think of a text that says so? I mean one in the seventeenth chapter of St. John, and the twenty-fourth verse: 'Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am'. 'That they may all go to heaven. I want to have them quite happy in heaven.' God's 'will' is that you should be happy for ever and ever.

Now can you find me a text where it says God's 'will' is for you to be *holy*. You will find it in 1 Thessalonians iv. 3: 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification,' that you are to be made holy.

Is it God's will that you should be *useful*? What was the first thing Adam was told to do? To be useful; to keep the commandment: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it'. What did Jesus Christ say men were to do when He

went up to heaven? Bring everybody to heaven; be useful.

First we are to be happy, then holy, then useful. Which comes first? Are we to be first happy and then to be holy? or holy first and then happy? It is a very difficult question. And I have no doubt what is the true answer. Which do you say—holy first and happy next? or happy first and holy next? Happy comes first; happy, holy, useful. Happy, because God loves us; holy, because we love Him; useful, because it is His will.

There was once a very excellent Archbishop called Usher, a very learned man indeed, a very good man. And in his time there lived another very good man called Rutherford, who wrote some very beautiful *Letters*; perhaps you would not like them much now, but when you grow up you will; I like them very much indeed. Now Archbishop Usher had heard what a good man Rutherford was, so he determined to find it out himself. He dressed himself as a pauper and went to Mr. Rutherford's house and knocked at his back door and begged for a night's lodging; he was asked to come in and was taken to the kitchen, and they gave him something to eat. When prayer-time came Archbishop Usher went into prayers with the servants. It was the custom of Mrs. Rutherford to ask the servants questions at such times. So she asked the Archbishop: 'How many commandments are there?' Usher replied, 'Eleven'. She said, 'You, an old man, with grey hair, to tell me there are *eleven* commandments! why there is not a little girl in the parish who does not know better'. She spoke so to him. He went to bed. The next morning Mr. Rutherford found out who he was, somehow or other. He went to him and said, 'You must preach for me to-day'. So he gave him some clothes, like a clergyman's black clothes, and Archbishop Usher went up into the pulpit to preach; and he took for his text the thirty-fourth verse of the thirteenth chapter of St. John: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another'. When he began his sermon he said, 'So you see we may call this *the eleventh commandment*'. Mrs. Rutherford looked up into his face and said to herself, 'That is just what the pauper said in my parlour last night'. She looked at him very hard, till at length she said, 'Why it is the same man!' So it was Archbishop Usher who taught Mrs. Rutherford that there were *eleven commandments*: 'a new commandment'.

But are you quite sure that there are not *two*? When Jesus Christ was asked about them, what did He say? '*Two*.' Did not He say, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' So you may say, 'There are *eleven* commandments,' or you may say, 'There are *two*,' which you think best.

What does God say about this at the beginning

of the Ten Commandments? 'I am the Lord Thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.' Which word in that sentence is the most important word? *Thy—Thy God*. If you cannot say *My God!* then you cannot 'keep His commandments'. But the more you can say the one, the more you can do the other.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### DAVID, THE MODEL USER OF GOD'S WORD

'O, how I love Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day.'—  
PSALM CXIX. 97.

I. The first Use that David made of God's Word was for 'Meditation'—or to give him something to think about. In our text he says: 'O, how I love Thy law! it is my *meditation* all the day'. This means that he was in the habit of reading some of it every morning, and then of remembering it and keeping it in his mind all through the day.

And this is a very proper use to make of God's word. This is what we should all try to do. We have many striking examples of the way in which this has been done by God's children in different parts of the world.

The Rev. William Romaine, a useful clergyman of the Church of England, for the last thirty years of his life read and studied no other book than the Bible. Surely, like David, he was making it his meditation all the day!

Joshua Barnes, a good English merchant, always carried a New Testament in his pocket. He read that Testament through one hundred and twenty times.

A pious English physician used to read fifteen chapters of the Bible every day. He read five chapters in the morning; five at noon; and five at night.

A pious French nobleman, named De Renty, always read three chapters of the Bible in the morning, kneeling on his knees, and with his head uncovered.

Alphonso, King of Spain, read over the whole Bible, together with a large commentary—fourteen times.

And a well-known Christian prince, of Austria, read over the whole Bible twenty-seven times.

These men were following David's example, in meditating on God's word all the day.

II. The second Use that David made of God's Word was for 'Light'.—He says in the 130th verse of this 119th Psalm: 'The entrance of Thy words giveth *light*'. David was all in the dark about his soul, till he became acquainted with the word of God. And we are all in the same condition. We are born into this world with our souls in the dark. We are in the dark about ourselves; about God; about heaven, and the way to get there. And we never can get any light on these great matters till we come to the word of God for it. But as soon as we come here for instruction, the light begins to shine around us. In the 105th verse of this Psalm David says: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto

my path'. It shows us the way in which God would have us walk; and tells us how we can get strength to walk in that way.

**III. The third Thing for which David used God's Word was for 'Cleansing.'**—In the ninth verse of this 119th Psalm David asks the question how a young man can cleanse his ways. And the answer which he gives is that it can only be done by the right use of God's word. And it was just this use of that word which led David when he was repenting of his sin to offer this prayer: 'Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sin' (Ps. li. 2). And the Apostle Paul teaches us the same lesson when he tells us that Christ purifies and cleanses His Church 'by the washing of water, by the word' (Eph. v. 26). What he means by this is that the word, or truth, of God has a purifying power like water; and that just as things when washed in water are made clean by it, so those who make a right use of God's word find that it has a power to purify their hearts and make them clean.

And Jesus Himself taught us the same lesson when, in praying to the Father for His people, He said: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth' (John xvii. 17). To sanctify means to purify or to make clean. And God has appointed His word, or truth, to be the means of cleansing the hearts and souls of His people and of making them pure and holy.

**IV. The fourth Use that David made of the Word of God was for 'Strength.'**—In the twenty-eighth verse of this Psalm David's prayer to God is: 'Strengthen Thou me according to Thy word'. There are many places in the Bible in which God promises to give His people strength. One of the sweetest of these is found in the tenth verse of the forty-first chapter of Isaiah. Here God says, 'I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee'.

If we have the Lord Almighty for our Helper what is there that we cannot do? The Apostle Paul said, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me'. And if we make a right use of God's word, to get the strength from it which it is designed to give, then, like David and St. Paul, we shall find it easy to do all that God tells us to do.

Let us look at some examples of the strength and power that God's people have found in the word of God. And the first example furnished us here we find in the case of our blessed Saviour. There He is in the wilderness, for forty days to be tempted of Satan. And notice now the way in which He met those temptations. As He was God He might have said to Satan at the beginning of those temptations what He did say to him at the close of them 'Get thee hence, Satan'; and He would have been obliged to go. But He allowed Satan to go on tempting Him, on purpose that He might show us how we must meet temptations so as to get the victory over them. Jesus did not get the victory over Satan by using the power that was in Him, as He was God. If He had done this He would have been no example

to us. But He met all those temptations, and got the victory over them, simply by the strength which He found in the word of God. Every time that Satan came and tempted Him to do something that was wrong, Jesus quoted some passage of Scripture against him. 'It is written'—'It is written'—'It is written'—was His answer all the time. This gave Him the victory. And if we hope to get the victory over temptation, as Jesus did, we must do it in the same way. The strength to be found in the word of God is the only thing that can make us successful here. Here is a story which shows how a little boy found strength from the Bible to resist temptation.

This boy's name was Billy Jones. He was a feeble-minded boy with very little education. His mother was a good Christian woman, though very poor. She had taught him a great deal about the Bible. He had committed the Ten Commandments to memory, and used to repeat them to his mother every Sunday.

One day Billy was sent on a message to the house of Mr. Graham, who was the richest man in that neighbourhood. As he passed under the kitchen window he saw something bright and shiny lying in the grass. He picked it up and found it was a beautiful silver spoon. He had never had any silver in his hand before. He thought, for a moment, what nice things he might buy with it. But when he remembered the eighth commandment—'Thou shalt not steal'—he hid it away in the sleeve of his coat. Then he went into the kitchen of Mr. Graham's house and delivered his message. After this he asked to see Mrs. Graham.

He was taken into the parlour, where Mrs. Graham was with some company. When she saw him she was astonished, and said: 'Well, my boy, and what do you want to-day?'

Billy went up to her, and taking the spoon out of his sleeve put it in her hands, saying very slowly as he did so, 'Thou shalt not steal'.

Mrs. Graham and her friends were greatly surprised.

'And pray where did you find the spoon, my little man?' asked Mrs. G.

After a pause he said, 'Under the kitchen window—Billy found it. "Thou shalt not steal."'

Then the lady thanked him and gave him half a dollar as a reward for his honesty. When Mr. Graham heard of it he was so much interested in little Billy that he had him placed in an institution for the feeble-minded, where he was well taken care of and educated.

Here we see how this boy found strength from the word of God to help him to do what was right.

**V. The fifth Use that David made of the Word of God was for 'Joy.'**—In the fourteenth verse of this Psalm he says: 'I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as in all riches'. In the twenty-fourth verse he says: 'Thy testimonies are my delight'. In the fifty-fourth verse he says: 'Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage'. And in the 162nd verse he says: 'I



rejoice at Thy word as one that findeth great spoil'. No stronger language could possibly be used to show what joy David found in the use of God's word than that which he here uses.

And when the Apostle Paul declared that he 'counted all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus,' he was only telling what joy he found in the word of God. And all who learn truly to understand the Bible find it to be indeed the source of their highest joy.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 141.

### LIGHT FOR THE TRAVELLER

'Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path.'

—PSALM CXIX. 105.

I HAVE spoken to you about one 'means of grace,' as I called it. I am going now to speak to you about another.

Many years ago I was crossing with two friends a lonely moor in one of the dreariest parts of the Highlands of Scotland. The road was quite strange to us, besides being a very rugged and steep one. The sun had not nearly set when we started, and we hoped to reach a distant town on the other side of the mountain by the help of the evening light. If that failed, by the aid of a crescent moon and stars. But ere the top of the pass was gained, star by star had faded from the sky and the rain came down in torrents. No house or cottage seemed near, and so intense did the darkness become that to proceed or to return were alike impossible. There was nothing for it but patiently to wait, through that wild night, in that wild place, for the coming dawn. After pausing for a time one other attempt was ventured upon, and we groped our way along the heath in hopes of hailing a light in some shepherd's hut or 'shieling'. Next day showed at what peril the effort had been made, owing to the deep holes and 'tarns' which had been skirted, filled with stagnant water. It was, however, successful. A glimmering lamp was gladly hailed in a cottage window, and on reaching it it was found to be the keeper's lodge, the one only solitary dwelling for miles round. Late as it was we were kindly welcomed and generously provided with shelter till next day.

But for that light I know not what the risk would have been of remaining for hours exposed to the midnight storm.<sup>1</sup>

You are, in another yet similar sense, travellers through a dark world. The Bible tells us that by nature we have 'all gone out of the way'. We are in darkness by reason of sin; with bogs and pitfalls on every side. Do you remember what Jesus Himself says? You will find His words in John xi. 9, 10: 'Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world; but if

a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.' We should be altogether benighted and bewildered but for a precious Lantern—a Divine light which God has provided to 'guide our feet into the way of peace' and on the road to heaven.

Can you tell me what that light is?

Yes; the text speaks of it. Our gracious Father has put a lamp in the window to help lost, belated travellers, and many have rejoiced in its light.

It is the very same emblem St. Peter employs. In his second Epistle, second chapter and the nineteenth verse, he speaks of 'the sure Word . . . whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise'.

What a glad and glorious radiance that lantern gives! God has hung other lamps in His vast universe to proclaim His power and wisdom. He has placed, as you know, a wonderous one in the very centre of what is called the solar system; the glorious sun which rules the day. And with what a blaze of lovely smaller orbs He has studded the firmament; the silver lamp of the moon, and the glittering crystal lamps of the stars. Aaron lighted every evening those in the Jewish Temple; but they were nothing to these brilliant lights in the Great Temple of Night—

For ever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is Divine.

But the Bible is better than all these. I have compared them to silver lamps and crystal lamps; I may well call the Bible a *Golden* one. Let me mention some rays which proceed from it.

It tells you first and chiefly about *God*—that He is your great and kind Father; that He so loved our sinful world as to give His dear Son to die for it; that though He hates sin, and is 'angry with the wicked every day,' yet that He pities and loves the sinner, and that it is not His will that so much as 'one of His little ones should perish!'

It tells you about the *future*. It opens to you the very door of heaven, and shows you the many mansions of your Father's house. It tells you that if you love and serve Jesus here and do your Father's will, when you die these pearly gates will open wide, and you shall at once enter in through them and be happy for ever.

It tells you that the grave is not the gloomy prison which the ancient heathen thought it to be. Rather that Jesus has taken its darkness away and made it a robing-room, where God's own children put on their white vestures before taking their places among the multitude which no man can number.

What a soft and gracious light, too, this lantern sheds on 'the dark places' of the road; those times of sorrow and trial which so often come unexpectedly! The sun sets calmly and there is no appearance of storm. But all at once the night surrounds us. The beautiful stars of life fade from view, and we walk in darkness and can see no light. Then it is that this

<sup>1</sup> It was a remarkable incident that the keeper and his family had gone to bed, and by a mere mistake had left the oil lantern burning in the tiny window. There are such things as are called 'little providences'.

Holy Bible proves so precious. As with the sailor and his beacon, or with the miner and his safety-lamp, so it is when God's people are out in the starless sea or down in the deep mine of trial that they know the full value of their beacons and their lantern; the light and consolation of this blessed Bible!—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 80.

### THE WONDERFUL LAMP

PSALM CXIX. 105.

ONE of the most famous stories in the world is about a lamp. I was as young as you when I first heard it. And to-day, speaking to you here, it all comes back to me. Aladdin, the ragged orphan boy, his poor hard-working mother, the magician selling his wares on the street, and the wonderful lamp! One thing I well remember, that like every other good thing, it had to be brought up out of a deep place, and when it was found it was, to look at it, nothing but an old and common everyday lamp. And who that has once read the story can ever forget how the poor mother, rubbing it one day with sand to make it look bright, found out what sort of lamp it was, and what it could do for her boy and her? It was a fortune to them. It gave them everything they wished. It brought food, clothes, money, and servants to Aladdin and his mother. It built houses for them; brought them horses and carriages; made friends for them; put enemies away from them. And it opened to Aladdin the gates of the king's palace, made him a king's son, and at last a king.

I remember, after I first heard the story, how I used to sit at the fireside and look at the coals burning in the grate, and at the flames turning and twisting about the bars, and far in among the flames and the glowing coal, at the strange houses, and fields, and trees, and faces, which boys are always seeing in the fire, and how I said to myself: 'Oh, for one other such lamp as Aladdin's, for a lamp that would make a king of me, or carry me like a bird over all the wonderful places of the earth!'

And I dare say many another boy has been as simple as I and wished the same wish. I would not be surprised if there should be boys before me who have read the story and wished that wish, and wish it still, and over and over again wish it in the long winter evenings as they sit by the fire. I am sure there is many an intelligent boy in England, not so well off as you are, who has to rise early in the morning and go through the dark cold lanes to some factory, who has said to himself: 'Oh, for a lamp like Aladdin's, to put all this darkness and cold away and bring the factory a little nearer, and give me a little time for school, and warmer clothes, and a better dinner when I go home!'

And that is not such a foolish wish as many people might suppose. It is not a mere dream, or a thing only to be found in a story. The Bible tells us of a lamp that will do for you all that Aladdin's did for him and more—a lamp which has been lighted in heaven and sent down to earth, which has light for

hearts, and homes, and churches; and something better than gold or silver, or houses and lands, or coaches and horses for ourselves; which every boy and girl may have, which many a boy and girl already have. This is that lamp about which prophets and apostles so often speak, the wonder-working lamp of truth and life, which shines in the *Word of God*.

Of the many wonders of this lamp I intend at present to speak only of one. And it is among the lowliest of them all. It is the wonder mentioned by King David in one of his Psalms: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet'.

But I must first explain—How a *Word* can be a *Lamp to one's feet*.

Seven hundred years ago all Europe was sending soldiers to Jerusalem to fight for the Saviour's grave. The lords of Jerusalem at that time were fierce Saracens, who did not believe in Jesus. And the people of Europe said: 'Why should unbelievers like these be lords of the place where our Saviour lay?' Army after army went from England, France, and Germany. And sometimes they won, and sometimes they lost. And when it was their lot to lose, they were seized, made prisoners, and sold as slaves.

It happened in one of the battles that a young Englishman, named Gilbert à Becket, was taken prisoner and sold as a slave. He was sold to a rich and princely Saracen, who set him to work in his garden. And there, as she took her daily walks in the garden, the daughter of his master saw him. And when she looked at his sad, but beautiful face, and remembered that he was a slave, first she wept for him and then she loved him; and then she resolved to help him to escape. So one night she procured a little ship, and had it waiting near the shore, and she opened the door of à Becket's prison and gave him money, and said to him, 'Go back to England'.

Now Gilbert had seen her love and return'd it. And when he was going away, he said to her, 'You too will one day escape, and find your way to London, and there I will make you my wife'. And then he kissed her, and blessed her, and went out free. And he reached the little ship and found his way to England. But the Saracen maid remained in the East.

Many a night she looked towards the sea, along the very path he went, and thought of him, and longed for him, and wept. She longed to be at his side. But how was she to escape from home? How could she cross the seas? How could she ever hope to arrive in England? She could not speak the English speech. The only words she knew were '*London à Becket*'. A Becket had taught her this much in the garden.

At last she could remain no longer in the East. She would go to the Christian land and be a Christian, and the wife of Gilbert à Becket. So one day she left her home and went to the sea, and to the English ships, and as she went she said, '*Londo à Becket*'.

She uttered these words, and rough sailors made room for her in their ships. '*London à Becket*,' she said, and ships hauled up their anchors and spread their sails and carried her through stormy seas. '*London à Becket!*' It was all she said, all she could say, but it went before her like a light, and made a path for her over the pathless deep; and she followed it until her eye caught sight of the white cliffs of England, and her feet touched the sandy beach, and she was in the land of him she loved.

She had far miles still to travel to reach London. And these were the old times when there were no railways, no coaches, not even roads. Old bad times, when robbers lived in dusky woods and bad men watched from grim stone castles that they might rob and kill the lonely travellers. But she went onwards. '*London*,' she said, '*London à Becket*.' London was many miles away; but that word opened up a way to her, went before her, was coach and road and guide to her. It was a lamp to her feet. She uttered it as she was setting out every morning, and peasants tending their cattle on the heath pointed in the direction where London lay. The lamp went before her over hills and fields, and woods and streams, and brought her at last to the gates of London town.

'*London à Becket*,' she said, as she passed on through the streets. From street to street went this Eastern lady, from street to street, and from house to house, and still as she went she said, '*London à Becket*'. Crowds gathered about her in the streets, and some wondered, and some mocked, and some had pity; but she made her appeal to the very crowds as she said, '*London à Becket*'. The words were caught up by those who heard them and passed from lip to lip, and from street to street, until they filled the town, and searched out for her à Becket's house and brought her to his very door. And then her long toil was ended. À Becket heard the well-known voice, and leaped and ran, and folded her to his bosom, and took her into his house, and made her his wife, and loved her with all his love. His word had been a lamp to her feet, and brought her to his side. She became the mother of the famous Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

That is how a word may be a lamp to one's feet. And what I want to tell you now is, that we also, like that Eastern lady, have a word that is a lamp to the feet.

A greater than Gilbert à Becket went to Jerusalem and was a prisoner there. And before he passed from His captivity He left a word with those that loved Him to be a lamp to their feet, to light up their path, that they might follow Him and arrive at His home, and live with Him for ever. It is of this word it is said, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet'. And surely if the mere earthly word which that lady learned from an English soldier could light her steps from the farthest shores of the Mediterranean Sea to London, the heavenly, Divine word we have received from Jesus is better fitted to be a light to us for the paths which lead to Himself.

The word of Christ in the Bible is this lamp. It is the lamp for our feet, to point out the roads we should avoid and the roads we should walk on. It is a lamp for the feet wherever you are, wherever you are called to go, on whatever errand, with whatever companions, and to whatever place. On the road to school, to church, to town, or to market. Alone, or with companions, this is the one true lamp for the feet. It is the lamp God has given us, to shine forward on every common path we are called to walk on here. And it is His lamp to light up the great high-road from earth to heaven.

And this is no new lamp, new made for us, and for us only; but an old, well-known, well-used lamp which men have had, in one form or another, from the very earliest times. It is as old as the days when God's Spirit first spoke to men and man's spirit answered: 'Lord what wilt thou have me to do?' What was it which lighted Abraham all the way from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of promise? It was the word which God spake to him in Ur. What showed Moses the way from Jethro's flocks in Midian to Egypt, and from Egypt to the Red Sea, and from the Red Sea to Mount Pisgah? It was the word which God taught him at the burning bush. What led David from the sheep-folds to the throne? He tells us in a Psalm: 'Thy word I hid in my heart, that I might not offend against Thee'. It was of this word, hid in his heart, he says: 'Thy word was a lamp unto my feet'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children* (8th edition), p. 39.

#### HATING VAIN THOUGHTS

'I hate vain thoughts.'—PSALM CXIX. 113.

WHAT A very troublesome thing one's own little heart is! Do you find it so? would you like there to be a glass door, and somebody to look in to see what is going on, up and down your heart? We can't, can we?

Sometimes when I have been walking in the country I have seen a flat stone, and when I have looked under it I have seen a number of ants, and every one of them has a sting. Our hearts are something like that—if we were to take off the lid and look in.

Did you ever read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*? One part of it is called 'The Dusty Parlour'. Christian was taken into the parlour—and a person there begins to sweep it; and then such a number of little bits of dust fly about. Each little bit of dust is as nothing; but altogether they make such a cloud!

Now 'our thoughts' are such little things; but they are very important. I wonder whether you are yet old enough to think about your 'thoughts'. A 'thought' is a very important thing. I will tell you the reason why. Everything is first a 'thought' before it is anything else.

I will tell you how it is. I will make a chain for you. You look at it.

Somehow or other, I don't know how, a little 'thought' comes into your mind; and you think it again; and then it begins to get to feeling. It is no



longer a 'thought'. When you have felt it a few times then it becomes a wish; and when you have wished it a good deal, then you do it; and when you have done it once, you want to do it again; and then it becomes a habit—a great, strong thing—a habit. St. James traces this in the Bible, about a bad 'thought'. A 'thought', then, is a very important thing, because everything begins with a thought.

I will tell you a second reason if you will try to understand me, because it is very difficult. You have a body; and because you have a body, you think most of what you can see with your eyes, what you can hear with your ears; or what you can touch with your hands. God has no body. 'God is a Spirit.' And for the same reason, because you think most of what you can hear, or see, or touch, so God thinks most of what He knows, because He is a Spirit. I believe God thinks more (not only as much, but more) about what we think, than about what we do. A spirit thinks about a spirit. I am sure He does.

'Thoughts' are more important than words—because God always looks into the state of our heart—why we do a thing, and why we say a thing. Those are my two reasons why 'thoughts' are very important; and why we ought to think now a great deal about 'thoughts'. 'I hate vain thoughts.'

What does it mean? What are 'vain thoughts'? Some may say, perhaps, 'It means a little girl who thinks much about her hair, or her ribbons, or her pretty face'. This is not what the word 'vain' means in the Bible. There are three meanings to it.

I. The first and chief meaning is *empty*. If you look in the Bible at all the places where 'vain' or 'vanity' occurs, you will find the meaning almost always is 'empty'. For instance, when Solomon says, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'—he means 'all is empty'. 'Empty thoughts.' Now I think there is a very large number of these—'Empty thoughts'—nonsense. I do not expect—God does not expect—that every one has deep thoughts. We cannot always be thinking very wisely. There are times when it is all right to think about nonsense. We must play. But I mean when silly thoughts come when they ought not—when we are in church or when on our knees in prayer—when we ought to be thinking very differently, I can't say just what I mean; but I speak of silly thoughts.

I do not know whether I ever told you of a young Italian. He lived in the time of a very learned man, who was one of the tutors when this boy went to the University. He was full of the honour of going to a great school; so he said to his tutor, 'Sir, I am come to this University to become a great lawyer. I shall work very hard, and pass my examination, take a degree, be a doctor of laws, and become very learned.' 'What then?' said the tutor. 'Why, I shall have to take cases when I am a lawyer.' 'What then?' 'I shall have to make clever speeches.' 'What then?' 'Perhaps I shall be a judge.' 'What then?' 'Why, I shall make a great fortune, live in a fine house, and be thought rich.' 'What then?' 'I shall live to a

comfortable old age.' 'What then?' 'Then I shall die.' 'And what then?' '*What then?*' He could not answer. Then he thought how silly and vain were his thoughts, thinking nothing of eternity. Thus I have told you of vain, empty thoughts.

II. Then the next kind are *proud* 'thoughts'. There are some places in the Bible where I think 'vain' means proud. One is in 2 Peter ii. 18, 'For when they speak great swelling words of vanity'. This refers to vain fellows, proud fellows. When once persons begin to be proud, there is scarcely anything in the world too insignificant to be proud of. It is quite astonishing what little things persons begin to be proud of.

A great traveller was journeying in Africa, and he went to see a man who was an African chief. He had little bits of metal hung down from the lower lip and from his nose; and a great feather behind his ears; he owned a little bit of land, and governed a few people, who called him 'chief'. When the African traveller entered his dwelling, the chieftain said to him, 'What do they think of me in Europe?' You see when people begin to be proud, they will be proud of anything.

III. Now I will tell you of another kind of 'vain thoughts,' i.e. really *wicked* 'thoughts'. Thoughts that lie; that plan wicked things. Look at Proverbs xiii. 11, 'Wealth gotten by vanity'—i.e. by flattering, by lying—'shall be diminished'. Will you look at Proverbs xxx. 8, 'Remove far from me vanity and lies'. 'Vain thoughts' are false thoughts.

I will tell you how a Christian feels about these 'thoughts'. He can't bear them. They trouble him exceedingly. If you are really religious you will care now more about the 'thought' than you once did about doing the thing. If a wicked thought comes into your mind it will make you blush and feel ashamed, which before would not have made you the least uncomfortable. Perhaps, somewhere or other, you heard a wicked word, a silly word, a loose song; and it comes into your mind; and, if you are a child of God, you hate it. It is always the sign of a Christian.

There was a little girl (I like to explain what I mean by telling you of somebody who has felt the same) of the name of Alice. She was generally very good and happy. One day, if you had seen her, you would not have thought anything was the matter: but there was.

When she went to bed her mamma was not able, as usual, to undress her, but told her sister Sarah to do so. Little Alice exclaimed, 'Oh, Sarah, I wish mamma were here. I want her particularly.' As she continued very unhappy little Sarah fetched her mamma, who asked her 'what was the matter?' She replied, 'I am very miserable: I killed Ruth in my heart. I thought I wished she was dead; and I am just as guilty before God as if I had killed her.' She continued, 'Oh, mamma, what shall I do?' She was told to dress and go and ask Ruth's forgiveness. She did so; and coming home again, prayed God to

forgive her for the wicked thought. She went then to bed and was happy. But she felt as much about a 'thought' as some of us feel about actions. 'I hate vain thoughts.'

Sometimes wicked thoughts will come into our minds. I don't know whether the devil puts them there or we put them there. If we do not mind their being there, then we are wicked. But to a Christian person it may be a comfort to know that there is not a Christian in the world who is not troubled with them. They come just when we most wish to be good. They will come; but if you do not indulge them, it does not matter. God won't be angry with us then. This is what Paul meant, 'If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me'.

Which is the strongest door in the house? Is not the front door thicker than the parlour door? Are not there bolts and a strong lock because it is the front door, that no one may come in we do not like? Do with your heart as you do with your house: have a good strong door, very thick, with locks and bolts. Do not let wicked thoughts come in. Be determined about it. Say 'they shan't come in'. Keep watch day and night.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### LOVING THE LAW

'But thy law do I love.'—PSALM CXIX, 113.

I AM going to speak about two things: first, about loving the whole Bible, and then about loving the law—'Thy law do I love'.

I. First I am going to speak about loving the whole Bible. I think we all love our Bibles. We ought to do so, I am sure.

A little girl once said, 'I think when God told people what to write in the Bible, He seems to have said to them, "Go, and make a book for little children"'. A very pretty and interesting remark. I think God did make a book especially for little children. He put so many pretty little stories in it. There is no book in the world like it; there are no stories in any book like those in the Bible. I like them very much better than *Peter Parley's*, and such like, do not you?

But certainly some people love their Bibles more than others. What is 'loving' the Bible? It is like loving a friend. What sort of a friend do you love? Somebody that you know very well? Perhaps the reason why some of you do not love your Bible is because you do not know it. If a stranger comes into your room and you are told to love him, you will say, 'I do not know him; I cannot love him'. So with the Bible—you must know it to love it.

I think David, when a little boy, in the fields about Bethlehem, loved his Bible a great deal. He thought much about it. He 'loved' it.

The wonder of the Bible is, it seems to tell us everything that we have in our hearts. It finds out secrets; and tells us exactly what we have felt. Haven't you found it true of the Bible, as the woman of Samaria said of Christ, 'He hath told me all things

that ever I did?' He knows me through and through. As with Christ, so with the Bible—Christ is the living Word, the Bible is the written word. When you think that the Bible tells you 'all that ever you did,' and reads you through and through, you will love it.

I will tell you a story about that. Once there was a traveller journeying through a strange country. He thought he would go to a cottage and ask for some water. When he arrived at the door he heard such a noise—the people inside were quarrelling, swearing, and fighting; and all seemed dirty and disagreeable. When he went in he said, 'What a wretched house you have here'. He looked all around to see if he could find a Bible; and in the corner, on a dirty shelf, he saw an old dusty Bible—it was covered quite thickly with dust. It was quite clear nobody ever touched it. He took a draught of water and went away; as he did so he said to the people of the house, 'You have a treasure concealed in this house! Search for it!' He said no more but went away.

When he had left the man went out to his work, and the woman remained in the house with the children. She began to think, 'I wonder where "the treasure" is. Perhaps it is under the ground. I will get a shovel, and see if it is there.' She searched; but could not find it. Then she thought, 'Perhaps it is where the faggots are kept'. Still she could not find it, so she gave up the search.

Then the woman went out and the man came in. He thought, 'I wonder where "the treasure" is. Perhaps it is under one of the bricks. We sometimes hear of persons putting things under bricks behind the chimney.' So he pulled out some of the bricks; but still he could not find 'the treasure'. Then he gave it up.

Some days after the woman was sitting alone in the house, very miserable; her children were quarrelling and she was very wretched; and she thought, 'I wonder what "the treasure" can be'. She looked all about, and presently her eyes fell on the Bible. She said, 'I remember my poor mother gave me that Bible. She wrote something in the title page, I wonder what it was.' She opened it, and saw written there this passage, 'Thy law do I love'. She thought, 'It is very odd I should think about this'; and then she thought, 'Perhaps this is the treasure'. This set her thinking. 'I have neglected this Bible very much: I will read it more.' Immediately she called some of her children to her and said, 'Dear children, I want you to learn this book. You shall read it with me.' So she began to teach them to read it.

A few days after, when her husband came home from work, she said, 'I think I have found out what the traveller meant by "the treasure"'. It is that old Bible my mother gave me. I will read to you from it a little about Jesus Christ.' She began to do so; and her husband liked it; and from that day they continued to read the old Bible, and taught the children to do so. Everything seemed so happy. They did not quarrel, but loved each other; they

were not dirty, but clean; they were not wretched, but happy. Everything seemed quite changed.

About a year after, the same traveller came again through that part of the country. He thought, 'I will go and see that miserable hovel, that house where all were quarrelling and dirty'. When he entered he saw everything exactly the contrary, all was comfortable. He said to them, 'Well, my friends, I am come to see you again'. 'Thanks, thanks, sir,' they replied. 'We have found "the treasure," and we have found it all we could wish it to be!'

There was a very little boy whose name was Samuel Pay. He died when he was a very little boy. He had a little Bible, and before he died he gave it to his brother Philip. This is the way he gave it to him: he kissed it, and said, 'Oh, Philip, I give you my Bible—for I am going to die. The happiest hours I have ever spent have been with my Bible. It taught me how to live, and now it teaches me how to die. Take this Bible. If you read it, it will make you so happy.'

I will tell you also what a man said about his Bible; he was a native of a place a long way off in the South Pacific Ocean. He had been converted to the Christian religion. When the Bible had been translated into his language the missionary gave him a copy; and this was what he said: 'My joy! my light! the dust shall never cover thee—the moth shall never eat thee—the mildew shall never rot thee—my joy! my light!'

And one more thing. If you would love your Bibles, you must not love *the book*, but you must love Him who wrote it. When you receive a letter from somebody you love, you may perhaps love the letter, but it is because of the writer of it. It is a very pleasant thing to receive a letter from somebody that we love, because it reminds us of them. The Bible is a letter from some one afar off. It tells us how He loves us. You must love God.

There was a great hero who lived about fifteen centuries ago, called Scandala—he was a great man in his day. In fighting against the Saracens he did wonders—he killed a great many people with his sword; and after his death his sword was shown as something wonderful. One day a traveller went to see it; he said, 'I see nothing very wonderful about it; it is like any other sword'. 'Aye, it is not the sword,' was the reply, 'but him who used it.'

The Bible is our sword—God calls it 'the sword of the Spirit'; we must not think of the sword only, but of Him who uses it—of Him who wrote the Bible.

These are my four rules, then: you must know it; you must know you; you must feel it is your friend in difficulty and trouble; and you must love Him who wrote it; and then you will be able to say, like David, 'Thy law do I love'.

II. Now I am going to speak of the second thing, about loving 'the law'. I almost think I could say that it would be a way by which I could tell good boys from bad boys—and good girls from bad girls—whether they loved 'the law'. I mean by that—the com-

mandments—being told to do something. I don't think we like it naturally; but when we have a right mind, we like to be told to do something. It is very pleasant.

Christ loved 'the law'. Will you turn to the fortieth Psalm and the eighth verse; it is a prophecy about Christ, written by David, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart'. Therefore Christ loved 'the law'.

Do the people in heaven love 'law'? They do. Why do I say so? What do they sing about in heaven? They sing 'a new song'. What is the first part of it? 'Moses.' They 'sing the song of Moses and the Lamb'. Now what is the 'song of Moses'? 'The law'. He gave 'the law'. They love to sing about 'the law,' about commandments, because commandments are blessed things. You will read about this in Revelation xv. 3.

Therefore in heaven they love 'law,' Christ loved 'law,' and we ought to love 'law'.

Little children think 'law' is very dull, and so they do not like it. But law is the pleasantest thing there is. And you will find a great difference between 'the law' in the Old Testament and that in the New. In the Old Testament God says, 'Do not do so-and-so'. Nine out of the Ten Commandments say, 'Do not,' one is different, the fifth, 'Honour thy father and thy mother'; that does not say, 'Do not'; but all the rest do. 'Do not swear,' 'Do not break the Sunday,' 'Do not tell lies,' 'Do not covet,' 'Do not commit adultery,' etc. In the New Testament it is very different. Christ and His Apostles did not say, 'Do not' but—'Do something'.

Did you ever hear the story about Archbishop Usher? I don't know whether it is true, but he is said once to have been shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland, and he went begging from house to house, for he had nothing to eat, having lost everything when wrecked. At last he came to a house where there lived rather a singular old lady. She was told that there was a poor man at the door begging; and she went out to speak to him. She said, 'I shall ask you a question that I always ask all beggars; and if you answer it rightly I will give you something. How many commandments are there?' The Archbishop said, 'Eleven'. 'Go away!' she replied, 'you don't know anything about it'. 'I beg your pardon, madam,' said he, 'but there are eleven, for does not Christ say, "A new commandment give I unto you?" Therefore there must be eleven.' Then the old lady was very much pleased; and gave him what he wanted, and found out also that he was an Archbishop.

Now I am going to tell you three reasons why 'law' is so pleasant; and I hope they will make us all love to do what we are told, for it is so pleasant to be obedient. I must say the pleasantest thing in the world is to be obedient. You try it. If any boys or girls have been disobedient, and found it an unhappy thing, let such try to be obedient, and they will soon find it is the pleasantest thing in all the world. I will now tell you why.



One thing is, it is so pleasant to have something laid down quite plain. Do you know what the word 'law' means? The word 'law' comes from the verb, 'To lay,—it means 'something laid down'. The 'law' we are talking of is something that God has laid down, quite plain, for us to do. We may be quite sure of it.

I like what Sir Henry Lawrence said just before he died. He said, 'I wish this to be on my tombstone, "Here lies Henry Lawrence—who tried to do his duty!"' It is a fine epitaph! He loved duty. Duty is preparing for heaven. I hope it will be said of all of us, when we come to die, 'Here lies So-and-so—who tried to do his duty!'

These are my three reasons why it is so pleasant to be obedient. First, because it is so pleasant to know what we have to do; secondly, because it is a proof that God loves us; and, thirdly, because it is practising for heaven.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### PATHS THE LAMP SHINES ON

PSALM CXIX. 118.

It would take too long to tell you of all the paths for which God's Word is a lamp. But I will mention these few. There is that first path of life, which in the Book of Proverbs is called 'the highway of the upright'—the path of departing from evil. There is the path of our common duties, which both old and young have to tread daily. And there is the last sad path we must one day all take, through the valley of the shadow of death. I will try at present to show you how, for the first and second of these, God's Word is a lamp to the feet.

I. Our Lord told a story which, far better than any I could tell, shows how this word can be a lamp to guide a soul out from an evil way.

There was once a silly young man who wandered a great way from home. He had been so long from home that the clothes, which were good when he left, were worn into mere rags. At home he was a prince; where he now was he was a slave. He lived in a perfect wilderness, with no creatures beside him but swine. And he saw all his folly in leaving home, and saw that he was nothing now but a poor, despised, lonely swineherd. 'Oh,' he said to himself, 'why did I ever come into this desolate land? Why did I ever leave the land of my birth?' Well, one day, when his heart was very sore, and the tears were running down his cheeks, the Spirit of Christ whispered into his soul that his father was still alive. And he said to himself: 'My father! my father! in whose house there is bread enough and to spare!' '*My father!*' he said again. That word kept shining in all his thoughts, and growing clearer and clearer, until at last it burned within him like a light, and it became a lamp to him, and the light of it fell forward, and made a bright path to him. And he arose and followed it, and it brought him to his father's house, and to bread and love and life once more.

Two young men were one day looking earnestly at a large factory in a certain town. They had come

hundreds of miles to see it, and to get into it. There was a secret there which they wanted to find out—a machine which a clever man had invented which was doing work nothing else could do so well. And these young men had resolved to obtain a sight of this machine, and find out its secret, and make drawings of it, and then come home and make a similar machine for themselves. And their plan was this: They put aside their fine clothes and put on the clothes of mechanics, and in that dress went to ask for work at this factory, and work until they found out the secret. But they had just arrived, and they did not mean to apply till next day.

One of the young men had the habit of reading a chapter of the Bible every morning. And next day the chapter happened to be that one in Exodus where the Ten Commandments are. He had read it many times, and always to the end; but this morning, when he got to the Eighth Commandment, he could not go farther. A great light flashed up from it and smote his conscience. Right up it came out of the words, 'Thou shalt not steal!' He read them again, and every word seemed to kindle into fire—'Thou shalt not steal'. He laid the Bible on his knee and took himself to task. 'Is it not stealing I have come here to do? I have come all this weary way to search out a clever man's invention, and make it my own by stealing it.' His agitation was very great. But he turned to his companion and said: 'What we have come here to do, if we do it, will be a theft—theft of another man's thought, and skill, and honour, and bread'. Then he took up the Bible again and opened it in the Gospel of Matthew, and read: 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them'. And he said, 'If this machine were ours, if we had spent years inventing it, and had succeeded in getting it to work, would we think it right if some stranger were to steal into our factory on a false pretence and rob us of the fruits of our labour?'

His companion was angry at first. But by and by he acknowledged that it would be wrong. And they came back to their home without the secret. God's word was a lamp to their feet to help them to depart from that evil.

II. I am afraid you will think my next two stories not worth the telling, but I like them myself. They are stories to show how God's word is a lamp for the path of our common everyday duties.

James Ankerton had got into a very good office in Liverpool. One day, when he had been some months at work, his master said to him, 'Ankerton, take this money to the bank'. And he gave him a bag with a thousand sovereigns. The boy never had had so much money in his hands before. And it was the very first time he was sent to the bank. Now James Ankerton had been an honest boy all his days; but he was only a boy, and, having all this money in his hand, certain strange thoughts came into his mind, and among them these: 'I wonder if I shall ever have a thousand pounds of my own. If I ever have, what

a rich fellow I shall be! A thousand pounds! If I had half as much, or quarter as much, wouldn't I send a silk gown to my mother, and a velvet jacket to my sister Jane! And I would have coffee every day for lunch along with my dry bread.' By this time he found himself at the bank, and that put an end to his fine thoughts. So he lodged the money, and came straight as an arrow back to his work.

And is that all? Yes, that is all. That is my story. He was sent to the bank with his master's money, and he went. And it never came into his mind, nor near his mind, nor within, I will say, a thousand thousand miles of his mind, that he might buy the gown, or the jacket, or the coffee with his master's money. Never! He was a boy who read his Bible daily. And the light of the Bible was in every thought he had. And when he was sent with his master's money to the bank that light was as a lamp going before him to the bank counter, as it goes before hundreds and thousands of honest boys in this country when they are entrusted, as James Ankerton was, with money not their own.

The next I have to speak about, to whose feet God's word was a lamp, was a little servant girl; and I only wish all the young ladies who hear me would take her for an example.

I don't need to tell any grown-up person, but perhaps it has never occurred to you young people that the roads a servant girl has to travel are very common roads—from the nursery to the parlour, from the parlour to the kitchen, upstairs, downstairs, into sick-room, and play-room, very common roads indeed! But for all that, God's word has been given to guide the steps of those who have to walk in them.

Charlotte was an angel in the house where she served. She went about her work so quietly that you would not know she was moving at all. If any one were sick she was the kindest, helpfullest person in all the house. If anybody was cross she knew how to speak, and how to be silent, so as to put the crossness away. If anybody was discontented, Charlotte's content made them ashamed of themselves. The children loved her, and well they might. She had good words and kind words for them all. And withal she was tidy, and thoughtful, and true.

It was a perfect delight to hear Charlotte speaking about her father and mother. Why, you would think they must have been of the blood royal—a prince and princess at least. She spoke of them with such love and admiration. Not as if she were boasting of them, of their wealth, or things like that. Not at all! She never concealed that her father was just a porter on a railway, and her mother the hardworking wife of a railway porter. But somehow all that went out of sight when she was speaking of them, and you were made to see only the beauty and goodness and love which Charlotte saw in them both. You thought of them as royal people, and of Charlotte as their royal child.

She had good things to say also about her Sabbath

class, and the good lady who taught her there, and indeed about everybody. Everybody had been good to her. There were so many good people in the world. God was so good. Charlotte was as thankful as an angel, and as pure.

There never was a girl of her age—and she was only fourteen—who walked more habitually and truly in the way of Christian life. And this was the secret of it, she walked by the light of God's lamp. Her teacher was one who took great pains with her class, and tried to find out the disposition of each scholar. And she had found out Charlotte's. And then she searched out a chapter fitting her disposition and said, 'Now, Charlotte, you will read that chapter, and think over some part of it every day'. It was the chapter in Corinthians about charity. And Charlotte read that chapter three times a day; and it was a lamp to her feet.

Day by day she consulted her lamp, and hid the light of it in her heart, and from thence it would stream out and show her paths of meekness, goodness, and gentleness to travel in.

Charlotte is in London now. And she is grown to be a young woman. I try sometimes to look into the future, and I see her old, and feeble, and dying, and buried out of view. But always I think, when that sad vision comes up, that her lamp will never be old—never be buried. 'Charity never faileth.' And her charity, I am sure, will pass on when she dies, and burn among the lamps that burn before the throne of God.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children* (8th edition), p. 51.

#### DAVID, THE MODEL OF PRAISE

'Seven times a day will I praise Thee.'—PSALM CXIX. 164.

We do not any of us praise God as much as we ought to do. And anything that may help us to learn to praise Him better will be very useful to us. And so we shall speak of David as *the model of praise*. And there are *four* things about this model for us to speak of.

**I. David was a Model of Praise for 'Temporal Blessings'.**—We do not praise God as much as we ought for our temporal blessings. His mercies to us are new every morning. 'He gives us life, and breath, and all things.' He is pouring His benefits upon us all the time; and we should be constantly praising Him for these blessings. The light of day, the air of heaven, the use of our hands and feet, our eyes and ears, the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the health and strength we have, these are temporal blessings that God is giving us all the time. He gives them to us for nothing; and the least that we can do in return is to thank Him and praise Him continually for them.

*The contented shepherd boy.*—This boy was minding his sheep in a beautiful valley. He felt so happy that he was all the time singing out to express the joy and thankfulness of his heart. Wherever he was the glad echoes of his cheerful voice could be heard. One day the king of that country was out hunting.

He was not known as the king, except by the friends who were with him. He heard this poor boy's merry songs, and thought he would like to have a little talk with him. So he made his way up to the boy, as he sat singing under a tree, while he was watching his sheep.

'Well, my boy,' said the king, 'tell me what it is that makes you so happy.'

'Why shouldn't I be happy?' said the boy; 'the king of the country is not richer than I am.'

'Indeed!' replied the king. 'Please tell me what you've got to make you so rich.'

'Well, you see, sir, the sun in yonder clear blue sky shines as brightly for me as it does for the king. The trees on the mountains, and the grass and flowers in the valley do as much to please my sight, and make me glad, as they can do for him. Look at these two hands! Why I wouldn't be without them for all the gold and silver that the king owns; and then I have the use of my eyes and my ears; I have all the food I want to eat, and all the clothes I want to wear, and what can the king have more than this?'

'You are right,' said the king, with a smile. 'But your greatest treasure is that you have a contented, grateful heart. Keep it so, my young friend, and you will always be happy.'

That boy had learned the lesson of thanking God for his *temporal* blessings, as David did.

Here is a story about a little girl who was not thankful for her daily blessings, and of the way in which her mother taught her the lesson of thankfulness. The girl's name was Kate; her mother's name was Mrs. Smith. At the close of the afternoon one day Mrs. Smith called Kate to supper. As she sat down to the table Kate said: 'I don't want any supper. There's nothing but bread and milk, and cake and berries. The same every night. I'm tired of them.'

Mrs. Smith said nothing, but after supper was over she put some things in a basket and asked Kate to take a walk with her. She was going to visit a poor sick girl who lived not far from their house. When they reached the place they climbed up the tottering steps to the garret.

There, on a straw bed, near the only window in the room, lay the young girl asleep. She was so pale and thin and still that she looked as if she were dead. But the footsteps woke her, and she opened her eyes. Mrs. Smith uncovered her basket and gave the poor girl a drink of milk. Then she placed some bread, and cake, and berries on the table, and sat down beside the sick girl's bed to watch the pleasure her visit had caused.

Kate's eyes filled with tears when she saw how eagerly the sick girl ate the supper which she despised a little while before. That poor girl had not tasted a mouthful of anything since the morning.

Her mother had been away all the day working, and now came home wishing that she had something nice to bring to her poor sick child. But when she found how well she was cared for, her heart was over-

flowing with thankfulness. That supper seemed a feast to them. 'If we can only keep a roof over our heads,' said she, 'and have a crust to eat, we ought to be thankful.'

Kate never forgot what she saw and heard that night. It taught her the lesson of thankfulness. Let us all learn the same lesson. If we have a home to shelter us, and food to eat, let us never forget to praise God for His temporal blessings to us.

II. David was a 'Model of Praise for Spiritual Blessings.'—David was very thankful to God for the temporal blessings bestowed upon him, as we have seen; but he was still more thankful for his spiritual blessings. He was always ready to praise God for these. There are many passages in the beautiful Psalms he wrote which shows this very plainly. This is what he means in one place when he says that God's statutes 'are more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb' (Ps. xix. 10). This is what he means again when he says, 'Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips' (Ps. lxxiii. 3, 5). In another place he says, 'Oh, how I love Thy law; it is my study all the day' (Ps. cxix. 97). 'The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver' (Ps. cxix. 72). 'I rejoice at Thy word as one that findeth great spoil' (Ps. cxix. 162). 'My lips shall praise Thee when Thou hast taught me Thy statutes' (Ps. cxix. 171). 'I will praise Thy name for Thy loving kindness, and for Thy truth; for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name' (Ps. xxxviii. 2). We might quote many other passages for the same purpose, but these are enough to show us how truly David was a model of praise for spiritual blessings.

Here is a beautiful illustration of the lesson now before us, given by a little girl. She had been severely scalded, and was carried to a neighbouring hospital to linger there a while in great suffering, and then to die. Now most young persons would have been very sad and sorrowful under these circumstances. But this little girl was a Christian, and the knowledge she had of God's spiritual mercies to her made her thankful and happy in the midst of her great sufferings. Night had come and most of the patients, and the nurses too, were asleep in that hospital. But as the clock struck—one—suddenly a low, sweet song was heard, coming from the cot on which that suffering child was lying; and these were the words she sang:—

Jesus, the name to sinners dear,  
The name to sinners given;  
It scatters all my guilty fear,  
And turns my hell to heaven.

Then the voice was still for a while. But presently it was heard again, and seemed to sound more like heaven than earth, as it sang out these words:—



Happy, if with my latest breath  
I may but gasp His name,  
Preach Him to all, and cry in death,  
Behold, behold the Lamb!

The nurse hastened to the bedside of her little charge; but before she reached it the lips which had been singing were still in death. The child's spirit had winged its way to heaven. She died in the very act of praising God for the spiritual blessings He had given her.

In the second place, David was a model of praise for spiritual blessings.

**III. David was a Model of 'Growing Praise'.**—When he had learned to praise God for His mercies, he went on praising Him more and more. When he first began to praise God he only speaks of doing it once a day. He says: 'My voice shalt thou hear in the morning'. 'I will sing of Thy mercy in the morning' (Ps. LIX. 16). Then it seemed as if he thought that once a day was not often enough to praise God; and so he speaks of his 'prayer as being set forth as incense, and of the lifting up of his hands as an evening sacrifice' (Ps. cxli. 2). Then he speaks of 'praying and praising God in the evening, in the morning, and at noonday' (Ps. LVI. 17). That was three times a day. And then, here, in the words we have chosen for our text, he says: 'Seven times a day will I praise Thee'. This shows how the spirit of praise was growing in David. First he said he would praise God *once* a day; then *twice*; then *three* times; and now he says, '*Seven times* a day will I praise Thee'.

Now we might think that seven times a day was often enough for praising God. But David did not think so.

The spirit of praise grew so strong in him, and his sense of God's mercies got to be so great, that we find him saying, in one place, 'I will bless the Lord at all times'; and in another, 'My praise shall be continually of Thee' (Ps. LXXI. 6).

And again he says, 'I will hope continually and will praise Thee more and more' (Ps. LXXI. 14). And so we may well speak of David as a model of growing praise.

And if we look carefully at the book of Psalms which David wrote, we can see plainly how the spirit of praise was growing in him all his days. When he first began to write the Psalms he had very little to say about praising God. In the first seven Psalms the word praise only occurs once. But as he gets farther on he talks a great deal about praising God. And the farther he goes the more he has to say about it. And at last it seems as if he could hardly speak of anything else but the thanks and the praise that he owed to God. The last Psalm in the book is a very short one. It has only six verses in it; and yet the word praise is found in that short Psalm—*thirteen* times! He says: 'Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him in His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Let everything

that hath breath, praise the Lord.' How well we may say that David was a model of growing praise!

And we find it the same still. When people truly learn the lesson of praising God they find that the spirit of praise grows in them, and like David they want to praise Him more and more.

*How many mercies in a year.*—A little boy, who was very clever at figures, had heard so much about the goodness of God that he thought he would try and reckon up how many mercies he received in a year. So he took his slate and pencil, and began to set them down.

'Let me see, there are 365 days in a year, and so I must put down 365 mercies. But then, I get more than one mercy a day. Why, every hour brings some mercy. So I must multiply 365 days by 24, the number of hours in a day, and this makes 8760 mercies for the year. But then, God's mercies come oftener than once an hour. Why, every minute brings a mercy. And if I multiply God's hourly mercies by 60, the number of minutes in an hour, it makes my mercies for the year to be more than half a million. How great a number this is!'

'But let me count my greater mercies,' said the little fellow. 'There are my dear father and mother, who have been spared to me all these years. Two big marks for this. Then one for health preserved; another for food; another for clothing; and then for teachers, books, pleasant companions, and merry play, more still. And then there's the Bible, a big, broad mark for that. And then the Sabbaths, fifty-two every year. But oh, dear me! my slate is full, and yet I don't seem to be half through with counting my mercies. So I must give it up.'

And this was just what King David himself was obliged to do. I don't know whether he tried to reckon up his mercies as this little boy did, by writing them on a slate. But I do know that when he was thinking about God's mercies to him, he found himself at a loss, and was obliged to say: 'If I should count them they are more in number than the sand' (Ps. cxxxix. 18).

**IV. We have in David a Model of 'Universal' Praise.**—*Universal* praise means praise for everything. When God makes us well, after we have been sick; or when He makes us successful in our business; or when He gives us kind friends who are able and willing to help us, we all feel that it is right for us to praise Him, and give Him thanks for these blessings. But when God sends sickness upon us, or trials and afflictions of other kinds, very few of us ever think of thanking God for these things. Yet *this* is what David did. He had learned to praise God for everything He did to him. He says in one place, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth' (Ps. xxv. 10). By 'the paths of the Lord' David meant His acts, His doings, what we call His providences, or anything that He does. David meant to say that whatever God does to His people He does in mercy and in love, and therefore we ought to praise Him for it. And so we see that David had learned to thank God for every-

thing; and in this way he became the model of *universal* praise.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 124.

### ARROW-HEADS

'As arrows are<sup>1</sup> in the hand of a mighty man; so are<sup>2</sup> children.'—PSALMS CXXVII. 4.

CHILDREN like arrows! That is rather curious. You know about arrows! You remember William Tell? How many arrows had he? You are not quite sure; you know he had one, for with that arrow he shot the apple off his little boy's head, and obtained freedom for Switzerland. Yes, but he had another; and when the cruel man who made him shoot at the apple on his son's head asked him what he had meant to do with the other arrow, Tell told him—spoke out manfully and free—saying that if the first arrow had missed the mark and killed his son, the next arrow would have been sent whizzing through the heart of the wicked man who made him do it. *William Tell had two arrows—one that could bring life, and one that could bring death!* Now I wonder if that is what our text can mean—that some children can do a great deal of good and others can do a great deal of harm? It is true anyway, whether it is what the text means or no.

But what *does* the text mean? This, at all events, that—

**I. An Arrow should have a 'Good' Head; and so should a Child.**—Now we begin to get at the meaning. What would be a good head on an arrow? Wouldn't it be one that was rightly balanced? If it was heavier on one side than another the arrow would go all askew. And, do you know, that sometimes happens with children—like as it sometimes happens with the little boat you sail in the basin. You want it to carry cargo, but you don't balance it nicely; you put too much on one side, then over the boat goes, and you have to play diver to fetch up what is lost! It is sometimes the same with children. They think a great deal about themselves; they always want this or that for themselves; and they go on thinking about themselves, and forgetting about other people, till they grow all on one side, and become selfish. A selfish boy or girl is an untrustworthy arrow; it is sure to miss the right mark.

A good head—that is the first thing—a well-balanced head, a head which thinks for other people as well as for itself.

But again (you see we are getting at the meaning now!):—

**II. An Arrow should have a 'Sharp' Head.**—Yes; it is a very great thing that it should be sharp. I have seen hundreds and hundreds of arrow-heads that were made of flint only, and I have seen hundreds that were made of iron; I have also seen a few that were made of silver, but I cannot recollect that I ever saw but one that was made of gold, and that was in a museum. But it doesn't matter what

the heads are made of if they are well balanced and sharp. Some children are like flint—good and useful and beautiful if they get fair play; but they are brittle, easily discouraged and broken in spirit. Most are like iron—can stand a good deal of knocking about and be the better for it! A few are like silver—very clever, very bright, always taking prizes; but there is only one in a million who is like gold—and we call him a *genius*. He has the worst time of all; for he is cleverer than everybody, and therefore everybody envies him, and some hate him, just because they don't understand him!

But it doesn't matter of what a head is made—if it is blunt it is of no use; if it is sharp, then flint is as good as gold for bringing down the prey.

Why are you sent to school? It is to sharpen you up! Why are you set to do things you don't like? To sharpen you up! Many things that make us brighter and better are hard enough in their way; but you know a grindstone needs to be hard if it would whet an arrow-head and make it sharp. Never grumble at such things; they will sharpen and polish you if you only let them. The more education you get, the better will you *go through* the difficulties of life.

But an arrow which had only a shaft and a bolt—a head and a body—of what use would it be? Why, you could not take aim with it, for there would be nothing to guide it when it had gone off. Therefore

**III. An Arrow must be Feathered.**—It is the feather that guides it. Now what is a feather? It doesn't seem very important, does it? Neither does a helm seem a great thing, only a bit of wood and iron at the end of the ship. Nevertheless, it is the little helm which keeps the ship right, and it is the frail feather which guides the arrow. And God's Spirit is something like this—it does not *seem* a great thing, but yet it is everything for guiding us right. If we have not the right spirit to guide us we are sure to miss the right mark.

Strive to get the Spirit of Jesus. You know what it is to 'catch' another's spirit, as we say? Sometimes you hear a person say about a naughty boy, 'I don't like that boy's spirit; I hope my boy won't catch it!' or again, when speaking of a good child, you have heard some one say, 'I wish you would catch that child's spirit'. Try to get the Spirit of Jesus. It means trying to be like Jesus; trying to do things in His Spirit, after His fashion, in the way He would do them. Try to get this, and the Lord will use you; He will set a very high mark before you, and will guide you right to it.—J. REID HOWART, *The Churchette*, p. 20.

### GOD EVERYWHERE

PSALM CXXXIX. 1-12.

**I. In the Woods.**—What these verses teach is that God is everywhere. And surely that is a very wonderful fact. God everywhere! That means He is east, west, north, south; in heaven, on earth; on land and sea.

<sup>1</sup>Omits *are*; <sup>2</sup>the children of youth.—R. V.

You could not travel or sail to a country in which He is not present. He is in all the kingdoms of the living; He is in the kingdoms of the dead. He is among the crowds on crowded streets; He is in the most lonely deserts. In homes, in schools, in work-places—wherever the night darkens, wherever the day brightens—God is there.

And, more wonderful still, He is in the secret places of the heart, both of grown-up people and of children. Away in, away down in the soul, where thoughts arise before they come up to be shaped into words in the mouth—even there, God is present.

But that is more than a wonderful fact. It is also a very solemn fact.

It is solemn to think that there is no place, seen or unseen, where evildoers can do evil and not be seen by God. No darkness so dark, no shadow so deep, no distance so great where God is not, and in which God does not see what is done.

When Judas went out from the supper-chamber to sell his Lord it was already dark. Would he have gone out into the darkness to do his evil deed if he had remembered and felt that the eyes of God were upon him? Those eyes beheld him leaving the room. Those eyes followed him along the dark streets. Those eyes saw him taking the thirty pieces of silver, and those eyes were full upon him afterwards when he came into the garden with the men who were sent to lay hold on Jesus, and pointed Him out by a traitor's kiss.

But it is more than a wonderful or awful fact. It is also a very blessed and very helpful fact. It is a part of the glad tidings concerning God of which the Bible is full. What a happy thing it is to be living in a world where we cannot find a place where our best Friend is not present!

But this is one of the lessons which a child may learn in a wrong way, and I will tell you of a young American girl who learned it in this wrong way. She thought of God's being everywhere as a terror. She was filled with fear by it. If she went into a dark room He was there; or along a dark road He was there. She was afraid to be left alone in her bedroom at night, under the terror of the thought that He also was in the room. That was in the days of the good Dr. Nettleton, and it was the good hap of this little girl to be brought into friendly talk with him. He told her that God was a Father, the best Friend that a child could have; that He loved children, and that He had given a great proof of His love in sending His Son to die for them. And all the terror went out of the little heart, and joy and trust came into its place. She was no longer afraid to lie down at night, or to be in a dark place alone. 'My Father is here,' she would say to herself, 'and He is here and everywhere to bless and help His children.'

God is everywhere. From His presence who can flee? If we ascend to heaven He is there. If we take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, we shall hear His voice, and the sense of His presence shall be in our hearts.

**II. In Dark Places.**—But perhaps the deepest, innermost lesson of the Psalm is a lesson for evil days. Days of that kind seem far from you just now. They will not always be far. In every life some days will be dark and dreary. Into every life, in one form or other, trouble will fall. When the evil days come to you, may you be able to recall this lesson. God is near to us, both in evil places and in evil days. He is in the deepest darkness into which we can be plunged. There is no place or time, however dark, in which His ear is not open to our cry. If everything else that is glad some should be taken out of your life, this can never be taken out of it. If one were to say, looking at his troubles, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,' even the night shall be light for such an one.

But though I am saying this, I know that it is a lesson much easier to speak about than to let into the heart. Nobody in great trouble finds it easy at first. And I am sure there are times and places so dark that only God Himself can help us to think of God.

That was what I felt one day when I was visiting the great round castle at Lancaster, which was once the home of its mighty dukes. I saw one place in that castle which filled me with horror. It was the place in which the dukes had kept their prisoners.

It is a dungeon, deep down under the castle floor. It has neither window, nor fireplace, nor bench to sit on, nor bed. The walls, the roof, the floor, are stone. And in the centre of the floor is a great ring of iron, to which the miserable prisoners were wont to be fastened with chains, as one would fasten a dog.

It went like ice through my blood, as I stood in that dismal place with only the light of a candle to show the gloom, to think of human beings, men or women, rich or poor, led down into that terrible room, chained to that ring of iron, and left there, as in a grave, without light of sun or star, without coal or candle, without the company of friends, without a single being to speak a kind word to them, without hope, except the sad hope of being taken out some morning to be put to death.

I said to myself: 'Did ever prisoners shut up in this dungeon find comfort in thinking that God was present? Did the cry of the afflicted ever ascend from here? And did God answer that cry? Did He come near to the prisoners? Did He turn the darkness into light for any of them?'

The answer which came to me was that God had many times turned the darkness into light for prisoners in dungeons as dark and terrible even as the one in which I stood. Into a dungeon more terrible than that—fouler, more loathsome, and filled with crawling venomous creatures—the great prophet Jeremiah was once thrown by his enemies. There was not even a stone floor there. His enemies meant him to sink in that horrible pit and in the miry clay which was its floor. He sank. The foul waters rose up about him. He said to himself: 'It is the end of my life. I am cut off.' But then he called upon the name of God;



and he did not call in vain. Telling the story afterwards in thankfulness to God, he said: 'I called upon Thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou didst hear my voice. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee. Thou saidst, Fear not.' And the prophet ceased to fear. By his presence God turned the very darkness of the dungeon into light.

III. In a Hospital.—I will only mention one other place where God is present. Were you ever taken to see a children's hospital? Did you enter the large room filled with tiny beds and see the sick and hurt children lying on the beds in sore trouble and crying out with pain? I was reading a ballad yesterday by our great poet Tennyson, about a hospital of that kind, in which it is shown how there also, to help the little sufferers, the loving God is present.

One day the kind old doctor of the hospital brought in a clever young doctor to see a little boy who had been crushed by the wheels in a mill. And this young doctor said, 'He will never get better.' The nurse said, 'Oh, but we shall pray to the good Lord Jesus for him'. At that the clever young doctor said, half to her and half to himself, 'Praying to the good Lord Jesus cannot set a broken bone, and the good Lord Jesus has had His day'. He meant that there was no good Lord Jesus in hospitals to help the sick and the wounded, or to hear prayer on their behalf. The only helper in hospitals, according to him, was the clever doctor. Now that was an evil thought to think and an evil word to say, and it was none the less evil that it was thought and said by a clever doctor. That vexed the nurse, who loved her little patients and prayed for them to Christ.

There was at that time in the hospital a dear little girl called Emmie, and she was very ill indeed. But it was her good fortune to have this nurse, who prayed to Jesus for the little ones who were ill. By and by the time came when the old doctor must try whether little Emmie could be healed. There was only one chance. He must cut away something that was keeping her from being well. But as he looked at her on the little bed, so white, so thin, so wasted, he said to the nurse, thinking the child to be asleep, 'I must try to do it, but I really do not think she will live through it'.

Poor Emmie was not sleeping; and when nurse and the doctor left she told Annie, who was lying in the next bed, what the old doctor had said, and asked her what she should do. Annie said, 'If I were you, dear Emmie,

'I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus  
To help me; for, Emmie, you see,  
It's all in the picture there:  
"Little children should come unto Me".'

But Emmie said, 'How is Jesus to know? there are so many beds in this ward'.

That was a puzzle for Annie;  
Again she considered, and said,  
'Emmie, you put out your arms,  
And you leave them outside on the bed.

The Lord has so much to see to;  
But, Emmie, you tell Him it plain,  
It's the little girl with her arms,  
Lying out on the counterpane.'

So Emmie did that. She cried to Jesus to help her, and she kept her arms out on the counterpane. And the good nurse prayed and watched—watched so long and so many nights that she was nearly ill herself with watching. But at last the morning came when the old doctor was to apply his knife to the child. The nurse had been dreaming that morning, she said:—

'My sleep was broken besides  
With dreams of the dreadful knife,  
And fears for our delicate Emmie,  
Who scarce could escape with her life.

'Then in the grey of the morning,  
It seemed she stood by me and smiled;  
And the doctor came in at his hour,  
And we went to see to the child.

'He had brought his ghastly tools;  
He believed her asleep again;  
Her dear, long, lean little arms  
Lying out on the counterpane.

'Say that Christ's day is done!  
Ah, why should we care what they say?  
The Lord of the children had heard her,  
And Emmie had passed away.'

Now that is the lesson I wish to leave with you to-day. In the sorest trouble, in the deepest darkness, in the worst of evil days, God will be near to His children and will hear their cry.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 133.

## LIGHT AND DARKNESS

PSALM CXXXIX. 12.

WHEN we wish to say that two things are as different as possible, we often say, 'They are as different as light from darkness'. We cannot fancy any two things more unlike than light and darkness. And yet the Bible says both are alike to God. 'The darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.'

They make a wonderful difference to us! During the long days and short nights of summer, when it is never *pitch dark*, we could manage tolerably without lamps or candles; but in the short days and long nights of winter, what should we do if we could not make a sort of artificial day with our candles and lamps? All work would have to cease, indoors and out. There could be no night-trains, nor any kind of night travelling, except on moonlight nights; no evening services, or lectures, or concerts, or parties; no pleasant reading aloud, or looking at pictures, or amusements of any sort that need light to see what we are doing, after the dark evenings set in. We should be like the Egyptians, when they sat still in the darkness; or should have to grope about like blind people.

But 'the darkness hideth not from' God; but 'the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike' to Him. How can this be? Think,

first of all, of what use light is to us; what do we want it for? We want it to see by. But what do we see with? Our eyes. Light would be useless to us without eyes. A blind man can see no better at noon than at midnight. Well; who gave us our eyes? God. Who made the light? God. 'God said, Let there be light, and there was light.' Then, you see, God has no need of eyes to see with, else He could not have made our eyes, and the eyes of birds, and beasts, and fishes, and insects. 'He that formed the eye, shall He not see?' (Ps. xciv. 9). And God has no need of light to see by, else He could not have made the light. No! God sees all things, not with eyes, but in His own mind and thought; not by the light of the sun, or moon, or stars, or flames, or lightning, all of which He has created; but by the light of His own eternal wisdom. 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1. 5).

The dark side of our world, where it rolls into its own shadow, which we call 'night'; the bottom of the deep ocean, where no light can penetrate; the dark inside of the earth, to its very centre, are all as plain to God's sight as the fields, and hills, and sea, with the sunshine on them. The tiny creatures that you may see through the microscope, but which are quite invisible without a lens, and the very atoms of which they are made—God sees them all. He sees those stars which are so far off that we can only see them as tiny sparks through a powerful telescope, but which are really mighty suns and worlds; for He made them, and He is *there* as much as *here*.

More than all this: God sees our thoughts. If you have a secret that you keep hidden so close in the darkness of your mind that no one guesses it, not even your mother or father, brother or sister, yet God sees it. 'Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do' (Heb. iv. 13).

What may we learn from this? First, God can always take care of you. Children are often afraid of the dark, even though they know that darkness cannot hurt them. One reason is, that they cannot see anything to make them sure *where they are*, and perhaps feel as if they had forgotten, or as if they might be somewhere else, they know not where. I think even a grown-up person might feel afraid if he were in pitch darkness and did not at all know where he was. Another reason is, that in the dark we can fancy all sorts of things; and perhaps you are half frightened at your own fancies, though you know they are nothing real. Well, then, remember that God is as much with you and takes as much care of you in the dark as in the light. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him.

When I was a boy, my father used to tell us a story of one of those good men who were called 'the ejected ministers,' because they were turned out of their homes and churches, and even forbidden by the Government and by Parliament to preach anywhere. A cruel law was made that they must not come within

*five miles* of a town. But those good men knew that 'we must obey God rather than men'; so they went on preaching whenever they could, secretly, in out-of-the-way places. Well, one of these good men was coming home late one night after preaching. There was a thick fog, and it was very dark; and he found that he had strayed out of the road. Suddenly he thought he heard a voice behind him. 'Stop!' He stopped, and listened, but all was still. So he went on a few steps; and then he heard the voice louder and nearer, 'Stop!' He stopped, and called out, 'Who are you? Who is there?' But there was no reply. So at last he was going on again, when the voice came a third time, louder still, as if quite near, 'Stop!' He shouted again, but no one answered. He took his pocket-knife out of his pocket, opened it, and stuck it into the ground. Then he groped his way to a hedge or bush which he could dimly see through the mist, prayed to God, and lay down and slept. When he woke the night and the fog were gone, and the sun was shining. He went to look for his knife, and soon found it, sticking where he had left it. And what else do you think he found? A yard or two farther on a deep pit or quarry; so that if God had not caused him to hear the voice, and if he had not obeyed it and stopped just when he did, he would have walked over the edge and been killed. So that was how God took care of His servant in the dark.

The other lesson is this: Remember that God always sees you—in the darkness as much as in the light; sees your secret thoughts as much as your outward actions. Beware of anything, even a thought, that you would *wish* to hide from Him. People often do wicked things which they would not dare to do, or would be ashamed to do, if they did not hope to hide them from everybody. But there is no hiding from God. And remember, no sin, 'nothing that defileth, or maketh a lie,' can enter into that Beautiful City of which we read that 'There shall be no night there'. Read Revelation, chapter XXI. verses 23-27.—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 243.

### LOVERS OF SUNLIGHT

(*Esto sol testis*)

'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.'—PSALM CXXXIX. 23.

I CAN remember when I was a little boy one of my great treats was to visit a certain building in my native city in which was situated what was called a 'Camera obscura'. One entered a dark room and looked down upon a circular surface of white cloth like a magic lantern screen, whereon, by an arrangement of mirrors, a reflection was thrown of the scenes going on around in the city streets below.

It seemed so curious to watch all these people going about doing their work, amusing themselves, meeting one another, entering their shops and houses, chatting and laughing gaily in the street—to see, in short, the hundred and one incidents of daily life, and yet to know that none of them were aware that they

were being watched by those who stood within the little tower. It was the sun that enabled us to be such spies upon the doings of our fellows; the sun was the witness that disclosed to us all their movements. But science has discovered that the sun can do much more wonderful things than that; the whole art of photography has simply been the power of using the sun's skill as an artist to draw pictures for us more accurate and beautiful than any we could draw for ourselves. The light of the sun is so penetrating that it can reveal many things our eyes could never discover; thus you have no doubt heard that the photographer's plate has revealed the existence of many stars that the eye of the most skillful astronomer had never seen, and each one of these stars is just a far off sun.

Again, some of you girls know how impossible it is to match the shades of ribbons or silks in any light other than that the sun affords, how clearly he brings out the delicate distinctions, and makes clear the subtlest difference of colour. You have noticed too, how, when you are in a room into which the sun's rays are pouring, you can see myriads of tiny little specks dancing in the sunbeams. These were there all the while; the air was laden with the dust and other particles of matter, but you could not see them: it was the sun that disclosed their presence. Now, nothing beautiful need be afraid of the sunlight; the lovely things only become more lovely when he shines upon them; but those which cannot boast of beauty may well seek to hide themselves from his tell-tale glance, for he will only make their ugliness the more manifest. The motto, then, that I have chosen must be that of a very brave man, for it contains the prayer that the sun himself may be my witness. Now, nobody dare use these words unless he was conscious that there was nothing he need fear to be disclosed in his life. I have heard a terrible story of how once some one took a photograph of the great Falls of Niagara, and when the picture was finished there was visible in the midst of the boiling torrent the body of a drowned man. No human eye had been able to see it, but the penetrating glance of the sun revealed it. There is only one light stronger than that of the sun, and this is the light of God.

The prayer of the old Hebrew poet that I have set alongside the motto is even a braver one than that of the motto itself. He prays that God may look into his heart and test his inmost thoughts. Now, would you and I be willing to let God do that? When the sun shines into a room and shows up the dust and the untidiness that have been hidden perhaps for years, it is only helpful if some one immediately sets about making the room clean and fresh and arranging all its furniture and pictures, so that once more it may become a joy to live in it; and when the light of God is permitted to shine into our hearts He shows us so much that is wrong, sinful, and selfish that it will only be a blessing to have that light shining there if we are ready to have God at the same time help us to make our heart clean

and pure. We need the light to show us what is wrong as well as what is right, but once we have seen the evil it must be our task to set ourselves to remove it, and once God has shown us the fair order in which He would have the room of our life set, we must ask His help to make it as beautiful as He wishes it to be.

The sun is a universal witness. It is not possible to escape his rays anywhere on the surface of this earth of ours. He may hide himself for a time, as in the long night of the Arctic winter, or on occasion storm-clouds may obscure his face, but he is always there ready to reveal whatever he shines upon. I remember being greatly impressed by a sundial in the public park at Baltimore. It was so cleverly arranged that when the sun's rays fell upon it the shadow not only told the time at that one place in America, but the numerous other angles of the dial—like the facets of a gem—enabled one to know the hour at many far-distant cities of the world. The one sun gave all these different results—effected these widely varying records. So the light of God is the great universal recorder. In one case it comes to disclose a life in agreement with itself, guided by the precepts of His testimonies, obedient to the utterances of His will. At other times the light of God's word breaking in upon a life shows such ugliness and shame that it almost drives the one who sees it to despair. Many of us belong to Scripture reading unions of one kind or another. These are excellent, and should prove of great help to us, but the matter of main importance is to store up the words in our hearts and live by them. We must let the light shine clearly in that we may see all that is wrong, and try to set it right. God's book has counsel for every difficulty, a cure for every wrong. We need never remain in doubt as to our course of conduct, if we will only consult it and have the courage and faith to obey and follow its direction.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottos with Great Lessons*, p. 136.

### THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW

'He giveth snow like wool.'—PSALM CXLVII. 2.

It is well for us to remember that God giveth the snow, and that because it is a Divine gift it must be a good one. I have no doubt that you children feel no difficulty in believing that the snow is a good gift. There are so many joys for you connected with it; but poor people, who have no fire upon their hearth, find it difficult sometimes to accept the snow with thankfulness. Now I want to show this morning that the snow is one of the many good gifts of God. The Psalmist says that He giveth it like wool. Of course, we all know that wool is a Divine gift, for it clothes the sheep and keeps them warm during hard wintry weather. It is, moreover, used up by men and converted into cloth, which keeps us warm on wintry days. The wool is thus a Divine gift for the warmth it gives. 'But, surely,' says some one, 'the snow is not like the wool in that respect; the snow is cold.' Now, I want to show you that even in this the snow is very much like wool.



**I. It Preserves Warmth.**—You must remember that God not only clothes us and the sheep, but also clothes the earth. He gives it one suit in summer and another in winter; and the snow is its winter suit, which it wears when the withering east winds blow and hard frost prevails. The farmer would look with grave anxiety indeed on weeks of frost before a fall of snow; whereas he has no fear of it when once the snow has fallen. He knows full well that hard frost kills the roots and young growths which are unprotected by snow, but that when the snow falls it shields vegetation.

Now, snow, like wool, is a bad conductor of heat. In other words, it does not pass off the heat or let it escape. That is the reason why cotton garments are so much colder than woollen clothing, just because wool keeps in the heat of the body, while the cotton lets most of it escape. The snow is like wool in that respect; it is a bad conductor; it will not let heat escape, but keeps the little that is in the earth, and shields plants from the cold biting wind that is blowing, and the hard frost of fifteen or twenty degrees that is on the surface of the snow. God sends the snow as a winter blanket for the earth. The earth may be said to be practically asleep in winter; that is, it is not actively engaged in producing life and growth. That is the season when it rests. God then says, 'I must take care of the earth when it is asleep. The spring is coming when it must be fresh and vigorous. It should therefore have a good sleep now. It is going to be a cold day; but I will send a blanket of snow to cover the earth, so that it shall be warm.' Thus God gives the snow like wool. It does not warm you, but it warms the earth, or at least keeps it warm. And, after all, warmth is a relative term. If you were to put one hand into very hot water and another in snow, and keep them there for a little time, and then put both hands into tepid water, the hand that has been in the hot water will feel the tepid to be cold, while the hand that has been in the snow will feel that it is quite warm. So what is cold to you is warm to the earth. Besides, snow makes it warmer even for men in cold districts, and protects them from keen frost. There are a little people called Esquimaux, who live very far north, who know the value of snow in cold wintry days. They build houses of snow, and live in them, because they shelter them from the keen winds and biting frosts. Dr. Nansen, I have no doubt, will be sheltered by the snow when icebound. So that in this respect, as a preserver of heat—the most unlikely of all at first sight—God gives 'snow like wool'. Again, He sends it like wool, because

**II. It is Woolly or Fleecy in Appearance.**—You saw the snow come down a day or two ago. It came down in flakes. Oh! how beautiful they were; and the dogs looked up and snapped at them in play, and every one rejoiced. Little baby boy, who had not seen a snow-storm before, was simply delighted as he saw the flakes dance in the air ere they fell to the ground. They looked so much like little pieces of

wool. Indeed, the ancients used to call the snow 'woolly water'—that is, water putting on the form of wool. 'He giveth snow like wool.' Drapers and clothiers sometimes try to imitate snow at this time of the year in dressing their shop windows. When they want to picture a snow-storm they take wool, or rather cotton wool, which is cheaper, and throw little bits of it here and there to look like snow. Their windows are thus made to resemble a wintry scene. Then, again, the snow is like wool, because

**III. It is White.**—Indeed, it is far whiter than wool. How bright the earth is when the snow covers it! I know of nothing more beautiful and charmingly pure. Those who live in towns get so accustomed to dirt that it is a treat to see something that is not dirty in the beautiful snow as it first falls upon the land. On the other hand, there are few things more sad than to see the snow trodden under foot. That is not God's idea of snow, but is snow as polluted by the foot of man. So white is the snow that the Psalmist could think of nothing as white—'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'. Everything—even the purest linen—looks dirty by the beautiful snow as it falls from the heavens. The Psalmist, sinful as he was, longed to be even whiter than snow. Where God forgives He cleanses. Blessed is the soul that, being cleansed, is made whiter than snow. This Jesus does for all who seek to be forgiven through His sacrifice and intercession for us.—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, (6th Series), p. 12.

### THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW

'He giveth snow like wool.'—PSALM CXLVII. 16.

WHAT a wonderful change a fall of snow makes in the appearance of the country! We wake up some winter's morning, and look out of our windows, and how lovely everything appears! It is just as if some fairy with her magic wand had been touching the country and sprinkling it with the loveliest jewels. The dark road with its muddy ruts is all covered with a carpet, softer and whiter than the finest wool; the brown branches of the trees look as if they were covered with the finest, costliest lacework, studded with diamonds all sparkling in the morning sun.

And how beautiful the fields are in their snowy winter dress! Just as if God had been making them into playgrounds for bands of angel children. If you look at a single snowflake through a micro-scope, you see fresh beauties in the snow; for each flake is a perfect crystal with six rays standing out from the centre in the most regular way; and this hidden beauty of the snow reminds us, I think, of some people's lives; it is only the eye of God which sees all their beauty and counts all the kind and gentle deeds which make them so pleasing to Him.

But the pure white snow speaks to us, too, of the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses our hearts, washes away our sins, and makes us clean and pure in the sight of God.

With what silence the snow has done its work;

with busy but noiseless fingers it has been clothing the earth in its lovely dress. You heard no noise in the night, and yet in the morning the wondrous change was there. And doesn't this silent working of the snow speak to us of God's Holy Spirit? Without sign or observation It comes into our hearts, and changes the bad temper, stills the angry passion, removes the evil desire, and gradually purifies our natures and builds the soul into a beautiful Temple fit for God to dwell in. Let us ask that Holy Spirit to do for us what the snow does for all it falls upon.

But, you may ask, is snow any good? It is very beautiful to look at, but is it of any use? We can understand the good of rain, but what about the snow? Yes, that is of great service too. In the Psalm it says, 'He giveth snow like wool'. Snow looks like wool, and it is useful like wool. We wear woollen clothes, and cover ourselves at night with woollen blankets, to prevent the heat escaping from our bodies. It isn't that the woollen dress gives us warmth, but it is the best thing for keeping the heat in our bodies; and just in the same way the snow keeps the heat of the soil in the earth, and so keeps alive the seeds which have been sown in it. It is the snow which prevents the frost from killing the corn which has been sown in the autumn, and preserves it until the smiles of spring entice it to spring up from the bosom of the earth. Of course it isn't often that our country needs this snow covering for the fields, as the winters are not very severe in England; but in some countries like Canada, where the cold is exceedingly intense, if it were not for the winter snow, the plants in the earth would be, as we say, 'frozen to death'.

And if we were to go to Greenland where the Esquimaux live, we should find that they build their winter huts of great blocks of hardened snow.

Snow is useful, too, in another way. You know the sun draws up water from the sea in the shape of vapour or mist; the wind carries these vapour clouds far inland and they fall on the mountain tops in the form of snow, and, when this snow melts, it runs down the mountain sides in little streams or rivulets, and these flow together and make one big river. In some countries where the sun is intensely hot and very little rain falls, if it were not for these snow-made rivers, the land would become so parched that nothing would grow, and human life couldn't exist.

So we may say that the little flakes of snow, as they fall and cover the earth with such a beautiful mantle, speak to us of the wisdom and love of God, and as they praise Him by being useful, so they teach us to make our lives useful too. And as each silvery flake comes from the sky it tells us to look up to God and adore Him Who made both us and it.

Look again at these tiny snowflakes! how soft and delicate they are! You would never think there was much force in them. But just see how much strength they have when a great many are packed close together. You see that great branch lying on the

ground? It has been broken off the tree simply by the weight of the snow resting on it. Or look at that engine how powerful it is! How it tears along, making such a fuss and noise; it seems as if nothing would stop it! And yet we sometimes read that little flakes of snow have blocked up a train and prevented it from going on. Sometimes people can't travel in this country in winter, the snow has completely covered up the roads.

Again, you read in the newspapers that some village, it may be in Switzerland, has been quite destroyed by an avalanche. That is, a great mass of snow has rolled down some mountain-side with such tremendous force that everything which stood in the way has been destroyed. Here was a forest, there some huge rocks, yonder a pretty village nestling at the foot of the mountain—but now all has disappeared. The mighty avalanche has torn up and swept away with it whatever stood in its track.

I suppose you have all heard of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. When he entered that country his army numbered nearly seven hundred thousand men, but only twenty-five thousand came back from it. What had become of the rest? Had they fallen in battle? Some of them, but the snow was their worst enemy; it was that which made the expedition so terribly fatal.

Can we learn anything from the power of the snow? Yes, if we will. We may learn that union is strength—the force doesn't lie in each particular snowflake, but in a number all added together. One by itself is as soft and gentle as down; add millions together, and their power is almost irresistible.

You remember Christ's prayer for His disciples? He prayed that they might be 'one'. That is, work together in love with united hearts and strength. And that is what all Christian people should try to do, if they want to be useful in the world.

Let us then try to learn these lessons which the tiny snowflakes teach us; and whenever we walk abroad and see the wonders in the earth and sky, let us think how wonderful God is, Who made them all, and try to love and serve Him better than we have ever done before.

The sun, moon and stars; the flowers, the snowflakes and drops of rain, all do His will; let us try and imitate them. They are only His servants, but we are *His children*.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 181.

## THE THAW

PSALM CXLVII. 18.

You have seen the long hard frost go away. The hard ground grew soft, the snow vanished, and the grass-plots, and fields, and hills looked green once more; the frozen rivers flowed, the water dripped from the roofs and ran along the roadside, and a thousand rills and waterfalls streamed down from the moors and craggy fells. How did it happen? Why did the frost go, and the thaw come?

Two very different answers might be given to this question, yet they are both true. We might say: 'It was because the air grew warm; a warm wind blew from the Atlantic Ocean instead of a cold wind from the great ice-fields at the North Pole; and so the ice and snow were melted'. Or we might say: 'It was because God pleased. He sent the frost, and when He saw good He sent the thaw.'

Now look at the eighteenth verse of the 147th Psalm, and you will find *both* these reasons given: 'He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow'.

I. There are two lessons taught in these words. I am not quite sure if I can make the first of them plain to you. It is this: **God Works by Means.**—Perhaps you say, 'I don't understand'. Well, I dare say some of you remember that when the snow lay thick on the ground you brought in a cupful to melt. Now suppose you had set the cup on a table and said, 'Snow, melt!' would it have obeyed your command and melted? No. If it had, we should have said, 'It is a miracle!' What did you do? You put the cup before the fire, and the heat melted the snow, and it turned to water. That is what we call *using means*—taking the right way to do things. Now God knows how to do everything, and the *means* He used to melt the frost away was to let the warm wind blow. Did He use any means to make the wind warm, and to make it blow? Yes. The sun warmed the air near the middle of the earth (between the Tropics, you know), so that it rose up, and the cold air came flowing from the North Pole to fill its place; and the warm air flowed towards the North Pole, and some of it came streaming down on England—a mild south-west wind—and brought the thaw. But why or how it is that the cold north-east wind blows one day and the warm south-west the next—that is what even our wisest men cannot tell. God knows; and when He pleases, it is so.

But now see the difference between God's way of working and ours. You put the snow in the cup, and put the cup near the fire; that was all. You did not make the cup, or the earth the cup was made of, or the coal, or even the fireplace. You did not make the snow, with its lovely tiny white crystals, or give power to the warmth to turn it into water; nor did you make the coal able to burn, or the flame able to give heat.

But God made all these. We can only use the means God has given us. *God makes all the means*, and then uses them as He sees good. And if we ask, 'When did God begin to get ready to make the thaw come?' we must answer, 'When He made the earth, and the sun, and the water of the sea, from which the clouds are bred, and made it the nature of water to turn into ice and snow with cold, and to melt back to water when the warm air breathes on it'.

God is not *obliged* to work by means. It would be foolish to think so. Sometimes, as we learn from the Bible, He is pleased to work *miracles*, just to show us His power, and teach us that all things obey

His will. But that is very seldom. Most things God does by using the proper means; not because He is obliged, but because it is the best and wisest plan, and He has made all things on purpose.

II. Then the second lesson this verse teaches us is that all **Things do God's Will**, just as much as if He did everything by miracle. Read verses 15, 16, 17, 18. Notice it is 'His ice,' 'His cold,' 'His wind'. All belong to Him because He made all things. Look also at verse 8; and try if you can find some other texts in the Psalms which tell us that all things were made by God's word (that is, God's thought and will), and obey Him, and are all His servants.

Yes, all things obey God perpetually and continually. All things. But do all people? Do you? Can you say that you obey all that God tells you in His word as swiftly and as perfectly as the snow melts before the fire? Alas! No. Nobody can say this; for even when we try our best to please God we find that we fail, and our obedience is imperfect; just as if the snow were only half to melt, and be all mixed up with little bits of warm ice that refused to melt. All things obey God perfectly; but you are not a thing but a person, and so God has given you this wonderful power, that you can if you choose disobey Him. You can refuse the good and love the evil; neglect the right and do the wrong. Why is this? Is it because God does not care about your obeying Him as much as He cares about the wind and the snow? No, but because He cares a great deal more. He wishes you to obey Him, not as the snow, and wind, and clouds, and sunshine obey Him, because they cannot help it; but willingly, because you love Him.

'But if I cannot obey Him perfectly, even if I try, and sometimes feel as if I could not even try, what then?' Why you must ask God to 'work in you both to will and to do,' and to let the breath of His Holy Spirit breathe in your heart till all the ice of carelessness and disobedience is melted, and your heart flows out in sorrow for ever sinning against God, and in warm, happy love to Him and the Lord Jesus. Pray that God will keep the frost out of your heart! —E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 70.

#### HAPPY WORK FOR EVERYBODY

'Both young men and maidens; old men and children; let them praise the name of the Lord.'—PSALM CXLVIII. 12.

I. Let us Think what it is to Praise the Lord.—It does not mean that we should always be singing. I hope you do sing a great deal—skip about and sing with all your hearts. But some praise is not singing. Very often when people do not open their lips they are praising the Lord most loudly and most sweetly. Have you ever thought that God listens to our hearts more than to our lips? And this praise is always to have a *thankful feeling in our hearts*. Praise is the heart singing. We want the heart that sees and feels how kind our Heavenly Father is, and loves Him for everything. One day as I was going along the road I saw a large coil of telegraph wire lying in a



heap. There keeping itself all to itself, dull and heavy, it was the very last thing that you would ever expect to get any music out of. Soon afterwards, as we were going that way again, my little girl said to me, 'Hark! what is that playing?' I pointed up to the wire—the same wire that lay coiled up in heavy silence. Now it was stretched along from post to post, and was making music the whole day through. And so it is with us. We keep our love in to ourselves and wrapped around ourselves, and then there is no music. But when our love stretches away to Jesus, then it makes the constant music of praise. It did not matter at all where the telegraph wire went, over the moor, through the wood, up the hill, down the valley, it was singing still. And so when the love of our hearts is set on Jesus, the gladness goes with us everywhere—at home or at school, at work or at play. It did not matter to the telegraph wire how the wind blew. Warm and sunny from the south, chill and nipping from the north, it was all the same; it sung still, and if we love Jesus it will keep our hearts singing always—that He can keep us in joy or sorrow, in health or sickness, in life or death. Thus the praise comes when our hearts are set on Jesus.

II. I am going to give you some reasons why we should all thus praise the Lord—'Young men and maidens, old men and children'.

Surely the first and best of reasons is **Because He has Loved us, and given Himself for us.**—Some years ago I knew a man in Cornwall, of whom I dare say some of you have heard. At the time I knew him he sold tea, going from place to place with a pack on his back; but before that he had been a miner. One day when he was working far down in the mine, by the light of the candle that each carried stuck in his hat, they were going to blast a rock. He and his companion had bored the hole for the powder. Then they laid the fuze which was to light it, and cut that with a stone. It lighted at once, and each ran to the bucket that was waiting, and called to the man above to pull them up. He could not turn the handle with the two men in it, and called to them that it must be one at a time. They heard the fuze slowly hissing. They knew that in a moment more the explosion would come. They looked at each other—which should go up? Then stepping back the one said, 'You have little ones, I have none. Go on; another second and I shall be in heaven'. The man whom I knew stepped in and was drawn up the shaft. Directly there came the thunder, and the great mass of rock was hurled in a hundred pieces—one little piece flew up the shaft and struck my friend upon the forehead; and when he told the story he would lift his hat and point to the place where it had struck him. Then, as the smoke cleared, they came down the shaft to look for the mangled remains of this man. 'You can't tell, sir, what I felt when I came down again,' the miner would say with tears. 'Why, he had laid down his life for me and my little ones! How could I love him enough! Well, we

began to search with axe and crowbar, heaving back the stones, when, as we lifted one great mass of rock, there we found him covered by a piece that had been shot out against the wall of the shaft and roofed him over, so that he was not hurt a bit. Do you think I could thank him enough and be glad enough to see that he was not hurt?' Ah! how can we ever love Jesus enough. For us He laid down His life. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The thunder and fierce lightnings of Sinai fell on Him, who gave Himself for us; and how can we love Him enough? Can we do enough for Him? Surely this now is everybody's joyful duty. Young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord.

Then again, here is another good reason, **We are the only Creatures in the World that can Praise Him.**—If we don't praise the Lord He gets no praise from His beautiful world. This is our greatness and glory that we can praise the Lord. After all, the dragons and great deeps can't really praise Him, nor the sun or stars. We are to render loving thanks to our Heavenly Father for all that He has made. Every one of us is to be a priest of nature—robed with the garments of praise we are to go in before Him and tell out the thanks of all the world about us. We are to see the beauty, and the love and the hundred uses of the earth, and are to render thanks to Him who made it all so good and fair. Because none else can do it, we may well say, 'O that *men* would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!'

III. **Praise is the only Thing that we can Give to the Lord.**—Everything in the world belongs to the Lord. He made it. All that we have He gave to us. What have we got then that we can give to Him? Only this, our loving praise.

IV. **Loving Praise is the only Thing that can Satisfy our loving Lord.**—Suppose that like Samson I were to put forth a riddle, who could guess the answer? This shall be my riddle—What can kill love? Hard work cannot kill love. Jacob worked hard enough for grumbling Laban, but that did not kill his love to Rachel. The mother here works hard for her poor little sick child, toiling all day, and rising often in the night. Sorrow and suffering do not kill love. They often make love stronger and gentler and tenderer than it was before. What then can kill love? This, if love never gets a word of loving thanks poor love starves and sickens, and is like to die. The father saw the prodigal a long way off, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. He brought his son home and gave him a ring for the finger and shoes for the feet, and the best robe and the fatted calf. And when the glad joy sparkled in the eye, and all his thanks for the father's goodness filled his heart, and flowed out in every look and word, then the father was satisfied. But suppose the son had taken little notice of it all—of his shoes, and the ring, and the fatted calf; if he had begun to

complain and to grumble, I think then the father's heart would have been very sad, and his great love would have been sore wounded. Nothing else can satisfy love, but joy in it and loving praise for it all. Think of this, and because our God is love, let us live a life of continual praise.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 121.

#### THE HONOUR OF THE SAINTS

'Such honour have all His Saints.'—PSALM CXLIX. 9.

**Such Honour have all His Saints.**—And the honour, you see, in your case, would be that of hard words to be heard and ridicule to be endured. But yet that is an honour for Christ's sake also; and so I hope you would all of you try to feel it, if it pleased God that it should come to you. That is the beauty of this word *such* in the Psalm; it leaves it so very uncertain what particular kind of honour it may be to each. Think first of the great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the Throne, and before the Lamb, whom this day we keep in mind; how one star even among them differeth from another star in glory; how even in the highest of all their ranks, that of the martyrs, there is a marvellous difference in the beauty of the crown which they wear; how much more is there a difference between those who have laid down their lives for our Lord and those who have suffered torture or imprisonment for His sake, and those that have not been called to any

other sufferings than that which we all must have through the struggle which always must go on between our worse and our better nature? Daniel told you so: 'They that be wise,' that is, truly wise, God's own servants, 'shall shine as the firmament;' but, which is a much greater deed, 'they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.' You have seen what we call the milky way at night, that band of pale light which stretches right across the sky; that is what Daniel means by the brightness of the firmament; then think how much brighter even a very little star is than this; much more one of those larger ones like the morning or evening star, or the dog star, that sparkles so beautifully with all manner of colours.

**Blessed is the Man that Endureth Temptation.**—And call to mind that the temptations we all have, one after another, make altogether the ladder by which God intends us to get to heaven; just as you set your feet on the runcles of a ladder, and trample them down, so to speak, thus it is with temptations, as in their turn you have to meet them. It was the way that our dear Lord Himself ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God; and there is no other way for you or for me, or for anyone else. And so every saint among the millions of whom this day speaks would also tell you: 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children* (2nd edition), p. 240.

# PROVERBS

## SANDBANKS

'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.'—PROVERBS III. 5.

This is a great thing we are told to do—to trust in the Lord. But wouldn't one almost imagine there was no need to tell people to do that? We sometimes need to be told to trust some person or other, for we would not do it otherwise—we are not quite sure about them. But to trust the *Lord!*—the good Lord—the one who never did wrong to anybody, but only good to every one—to tell us to trust *Him* does seem to be a thing quite unnecessary.

Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't; but what about the next words, 'Trust in the Lord *with all thine heart*'? Is not that just what we need to think about, and need to do? Are we not always inclined to trust Him only a little bit, and distrust Him all the rest? Yet the only way we can ever come to know how good the Lord is, is by trusting Him with *all* our heart.

There was a father once who had two sons. One morning he took them early to a distant tree, and said, 'If you will water the roots of this tree every morning at sunrise throughout the year, without fail, you will get riches'. It seemed a strange thing to do; but father had said it, and his sons believed him; so every morning at sunrise the two brothers went out and watered the tree for many months.

But the father was taken ill and died, and his farm was divided between his two sons, and one went out every morning as before to water the tree, but the other soon gave it up. He had other things to do, he said: he saw no good of wasting his time in this way. 'Father must have made a mistake,' he was certain, 'for though he had gone every morning to water the tree, he had got no riches yet'. But the other said, 'Father was wise; father would not deceive us; I shall go on doing as he told me'. So, when the sun rose every morning it shone upon one brother out in the fields watering the tree, but it did not get shining on the other brother till long, long afterwards, for he was lying abed, and lay there every day till the sun was high in the sky.

So years rolled on, and the farm which the obedient brother had grew better and better, while the farm of the other grew worse and worse, and he became poorer and poorer as his brother grew richer and richer. All that the father promised had come true; but not in the way the sons had expected. They had thought that by watering the roots of this tree great riches would suddenly come to them; but that was not what the father meant. What he wanted them to learn was the habit of early rising, for he knew that

if once they were afield at sunrise they would be sure to attend well to their farms, and be industrious, and so would get both health and wealth. And it was so—one brother grew richer for obeying his father, even when he did not quite understand all that he meant; but the other brother grew poorer for leaning to his own understanding.

It is much the same with us and God, Who is the Great Father of us all. There are many things He bids us do of which we cannot see the meaning at the time, yet when we trust and obey rather than go by our own understanding, in the end God is found to have been right, and wise, and good, and kind.

What we have to do, then, is to trust Him with all our heart. Do that with *prayer*. He bids you pray, and He promises many blessings for you when you obey. Perhaps, however, you cannot very well see how all these blessings are to come out of prayer. Never mind! Do you what the obedient son did—trust in the Father with all your heart, and one day, when you begin to look around you, and look within yourself, you will find that, lo! you have all the time been getting the blessings which He promised! *Trust God's Word, not your own knowledge.*

On a beautiful Sabbath morning, once, when I was on the east coast, as we came out of the little church we heard the fring of guns at sea. We were not long in learning why. There—right before us—was a foreign ship, sailing straight for the sandbank. Those on board could not see the sandbank (we could not see it), for it was covered by the sea, which was calm and beautiful, smiling as if all was right. Yes, but the people on the ship ought to have known where it was, for it was marked upon their maps. But because all was so fair and smooth and pleasant, they were going by their own understanding rather than by their instructions. So the lightship near the bank was firing guns to warn them of their danger.

Oh, what a flutter there was on board the ship when the first gun was fired! The map was brought out and eagerly scanned; but while they were studying it another gun was fired, which showed them the danger was near. So the sailors limbered aloft, the sails were backed, and the ship was hove-to—stopped—and then all turned their eyes to make out what the lightship meant by her signals, and so slowly, carefully, anxiously, the ship at last got away. Had the warning, however, been only a few minutes later, the ship would have been wrecked, as many a good vessel had been before it, and all because the men would trust to their own understanding rather than go by their instructions!

There are dangers and sandbanks, and snares and



sins God warns us about, and very often you cannot see these dangers yourself at the first—everything looks pleasant and safe, and then you are tempted to go by what you think yourself rather than by what God says. Don't do that!—pray, don't do that! God does not deceive us. Trust Him in these times with all your heart; do what He bids, even though you cannot see why He should say it; for if you go by your own understanding rather than by God's Word, in the end God will be found to have been right, and you to have been very, very wrong. In everything, then, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding'.—J. REID HOWAT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 104.

#### A MOTTO FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

(An Autumn Sermon)

'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—PROVERBS III. 6.

THE holidays are past, and the hard work of school has begun again. You are feeling, perhaps even more than at the New Year, that a year has closed behind you, and a new one is opening in front. I wish to speak to you about the school year just begun.

The other day I was standing in a room in a friend's house, when my eye was attracted by an illuminated card hung up over the mantelpiece. The words were printed in letters of different sizes, and surrounded by a border of green and gold rather faded with age. The text was the one which stands at the head of this sermon. My friend, observing that I was looking at it, came behind me and said, 'That card is very old; it has been hanging there for twenty years. The text was intended to be the text of my childhood. I learned it and used often to repeat it without thinking of its meaning. Sometimes it would attract my eye as I rose in the morning, or entered the room during the day. As I grew up, and the trouble and temptation of life began, it came to have a new meaning to me. I made it my motto. Often at night, when I was alone, I used to look up to it, leaning on the mantelpiece as you are doing now, and its dear homely face gave me good cheer. I think it is a good motto—"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."'

Do you not think so too? Will you not take it as your motto for this school year? Let us try to apply it to the different parts of the life you are to lead. We may apply it to these four points—your play, your work, your companionships, and your thoughts of the future.

I. Play.—You have had a glorious time of play during the bygone weeks. Some of you may have remained at home, but it was not to go through the old routine of lessons and school. You were out all day long, running about the streets, or roaming among the fields and the woods. But most of you were whirled off by train to some holiday resort. You were at the seaside, bathing in the morning, wading all day, chased by the incoming tide, digging

in the sand, making castles and towns and gardens, scrambling among the rocks, sailing tiny boats in the pools, and watching the ships disappear away across the ocean. Or you were inland, at some place in the country, making friends with the dogs and ponies at a farm-house, helping to toss the hay and following the carts home, having picnics on the hillsides, and learning the names of the flowers in the meadows. It was a glorious time, and you cannot think how it could fly so quickly past.

But though you are back to school, play has not come to an end. Every day the playground is ringing once more with your merry shouts. You contrive, I am sure, to have at least one vacant hour for it in the evening; and then every week there comes the Saturday, which you know how to enjoy.

Now, do you acknowledge God in your play? Perhaps you are surprised that I should ask. You never thought of such a thing. If I spoke about acknowledging Him on Sunday, or in the morning and evening when the hour comes for prayer and reading the Bible, or in a time of sickness, or when the angel of death has entered your home and taken some dear friend away, you could understand it. But how can you do so at your play?

It is God Who gives this gift to you. He knows that we cannot be working always. The body could not stand it, and still less could the mind. He does not wish it. He knows that His creatures need rest and recreation, and has made provision for them. I do not know any greater proof of His consideration than this. It is for this reason that He has created the night for repose, and sends us sweet sleep, which folds us in its kind embrace, and makes the jaded mind and body fresh and strong for daily work. For the same reason He has created the blessed Sabbath, on which man and beast may rest, instead of being wasted with the tear and wear of unceasing toil. So, too, He gives you your holidays, your daily hours of play and your glorious Saturdays. He knows that you need them; He loves to see you fresh and joyful. He does not come near to people only when they are suffering and weeping. He is near you at your play, and rejoices with you when you rejoice.

Now see how you can acknowledge Him in your play—by recognising that it is He who gives it, by thanking Him for it, and by remembering that He is near you when you are at it. It would not make you less happy to remember this, but far more happy. Only, it would repress many a wicked word, many an angry thought, many an ungentle and ungenerous deed. If all children remembered it, a new sunshine would fall on the playground, and a new joy ring in the voices there.

II. Work.—For many days the schoolrooms were deserted, and the school as deathlike as an idle mill. But the machinery is awake again; and the building alive with the murmur of the life within. You have had to bring the old books out of their places or buy new ones. The satchel, the slate, and the copy-book have had to be dragged forth from the corners into

which you threw them when the holidays arrived. In the morning you have to get up early and trudge off the old road again. For five or six hours you are cooped up within the school-walls, reading, spelling, translating, repeating, counting, writing. And in the evening come the stiffest hours of the day, when you have to commit to memory the tasks of the morrow. It is hard work; and it will go on now for many months before the bright weeks of summer and freedom return again.

Do you acknowledge God in your work? He expects you to do so. It is a large part of your life. You have to give to it the best hours of your time and the best of your strength. If God be not acknowledged here, he is shut out from the most important part of your life.

But how is He to be acknowledged? Well, first of all by recognising that He has given you your work to do, and expects you to do it well. You might perhaps think that it would be the finest thing in the world to have no work to do at all, but enjoy a never-ending holiday. Perhaps when you came back from the vacation the other week, you found it very disagreeable to go back to school again, and are still feeling lessons very slow. There are many grown-up people who dream that it would be a fine thing not to have to work, but be able always to go about idle. But there is nothing so miserable. Only the other day I was reading a letter written by a young lady who was in the lowest depths of melancholy. What do you think made her miserable? It was that she had nothing to do, and did not know how to spend her time and energies. There are thousands like her. I have known many young men who were rich, and on that account had no trade nor anything to occupy their time. The result almost invariably was that they were both miserable and wicked. If any of you boys have fathers so rich that they might bring you up without making you do any work, I would beg them not to do so. It would be a curse. God intends us to work; and we can be happy only when we have plenty to do. You might prefer to have no lessons just now; but then what would become of you when you have grown up? You would be utterly ignorant, unable to read a book or a paper or write a letter; you would be unfit to speak with cultivated people; nobody worth knowing would take you for a friend; and you would not be able to fill any situation of importance. Your existence would be mean and miserable. It is in order that your life in the future may be useful and noble that God now gives you the tasks which you have to perform, and expects you to do them well.

Besides, the way in which you do your tasks now will in all probability determine the way in which you will do the greater tasks of the future. Boys and girls work, and so do men and women. But their tasks are different. You are looking forward to follow different trades and professions, and to occupy various positions. Would you not like to do your work in future, whatever it may be, well? You

would not like to be pointed at and scorned as useless and awkward. But there is nothing I see more clearly than that what you are as boys and girls now, you will be as men and women afterwards. If now you are idle and dishonest about your school tasks, you will be the same with the great tasks of life; but if you are diligent, honest, and earnest, such will you also be when called to the higher work. God has given you a work to do now, and wishes you to do it, so that you may be well prepared for executing what He has in store for you in the future.

But I dare say there are some of you who find it very hard to take this view of your lessons. Your minds are restless and roving. Though you try to fix them on your work, they wander away from it, and begin to think of play and dream about the past holidays. In the evening, when you ought to be poring over your book, your eyes are lifted off it, and roam about the room or stare out at the window; and your feet are very apt to follow them. Others of you are slow at learning. You are surprised to see how quickly your clever companions can get their lessons ready. But it takes long to get them into your head, and they run as easily out again as water out of a sieve. Well, 'in all thy ways acknowledge Him'. Have you ever told God about this? If He gives you work, He is willing to give you help as well. Do you pray about your lessons, asking God to assist you to overcome your defects? Many school-children have found this a splendid help. It is the best way of acknowledging God in your work now; and what is more, it will form in you a habit of consulting Him about everything, which will be of priceless value when the work and difficulties of manhood and womanhood arrive.

**III. Companionships.**—Boys and girls always have companions. I wonder what a boy would be like who had no friends. I should not like to see him. During the holidays you have been cementing friendships in country rambles. And as you sit day by day during the winter on the same bench with others, and sometimes read from the same book, I am sure that friendship will be one of the largest as well as sweetest parts of your life.

There can be none in which it is more important to acknowledge God, so that He may direct your paths. And I say this, not because I wish to urge you to seek for good companions, and accept no others, but especially because I wish to see you being good companions.

Have you a friend? You will be a great deal with him during the coming year. He will hear you speaking constantly; he will constantly be seeing the things you do. The consequence will be, that by the time the session closes he will be either the better or the worse for associating with you. You will make him the sort of boy he will be. Perhaps, also, the sort of man he will be in his future life may depend on his present friendship with you. Very few boys and girls think of this, and let it weigh with them from day to day. We do not easily see the

influence we have on others. A single sentence, or a single action, or a single day seems to produce so little impression. So when snow begins to fall, if you hold out your hand the single flakes melt and disappear in an instant. A single flake is almost nothing at all. But let the flakes fall all day, and what a mass they become! They cover the hills and block the streets, and weigh down the branches of the trees, till even the mighty arms of the oak crack beneath the burden. So our words for a year falling on a companion's mind, along with the impressions made by our example, cannot help producing great effects.

There are some of you whose influence on others is not confined to one or two companions. It may extend over a score, or even over a whole school. I have known a boy who, because he was rich and clever, was looked up to by the whole school; and because he was wicked, became the tempter of hundreds, and poisoned the atmosphere which they breathed. On the other hand, two or three boys who are generous, manly, and true, may impart a high and pure tone to all that goes on both in the playground and in the classes. Will you not in this acknowledge God? By the love you cherish to your dearest friend, by the sweetness and the joy of your companionships, by the terror of being a tempter and sowing seed which may spring up as eternal woe upon the soil of others' souls, I beseech you to pray Him to save you from exerting an influence polluted and debasing; and, by making your own character pure and Christlike, to enable you to help and bless those with whom you are connected by friendship's golden bond.

**IV. Thoughts of the Future.**—Children do not think much of the future. They live in the present. Yet some of you are thinking a great deal about it. Some of you have left home for the first time to attend school in a distant town or city; and in the first dreary weeks of home-sickness you are thinking more of the future than ever you did in your life before. Others are entering on their last session, and all their thoughts are about what they will be and do in the time beyond. But there are others still to whom I wish particularly to speak. Some of you do not feel, as you read this sermon, that it speaks to you. You have read and heard children's sermons for years, and always felt that they were addressed to you. But you will never feel so again, however many of them may be preached in your hearing, and however much you may enjoy them. The reason is, because you are a child no more. Last session was your last at school. You have gone to some trade or office, or you are to be employed at home. Well do I know the look of those like you whom I am meeting day by day in the streets, which says as plainly as words could speak it that childhood is past. You are thinking of the future. It is crowding on you every day; and you are dreaming about it by night—all you are to achieve and all that fortune is to bring you. Are you acknowledging

God in these thoughts? You have reached a great turning-point in life. Have you emerged from your childhood saved or unsaved? Have you made the great decision yet? You have far more need than ever before to acknowledge Him in all your ways, that He may direct your steps. New duties, new temptations, new friendships are before you, and they are too much for your own wisdom and your own strength. I most earnestly hope for you a bright future, full of usefulness, of nobleness, and joy. But this can only be if you are taking God into your life. Without Him, however brave and strong you be, you will stumble and fall. Is Christ your Saviour and your Friend? He comes to you now, and at the outset of your career offers to accompany you. Will you not welcome Him and clasp Him to your heart with bands of triple steel? 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'—*JAMES STALKER, The New Song*, p. 118.

#### PLEASANT WAYS AND PEACEFUL PATHS

'Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.'—*PROVERBS III. 17.*

WHEN we look at a verse in the Bible it is something like looking up into the sky when it begins to get dark. We look first and see nothing; then we look a little longer and we see a solitary star; and we look a little longer and see another, and another, and another, till it seems all stars. That is something like looking at a verse in the Bible. Let us see if we can find any little stars here. I am sure there are some.

In the beginning of the verse it says 'ways,' and in the end 'paths'. Why are they called 'ways of pleasantness,' and 'paths of peace'? What is the difference? Can you think?

'Ways' you know are broad; 'paths' are little, narrow, retired places. Did you ever know what it was to go and have a day's 'pleasure,' and when you came home to feel no 'peace'? Do you know the difference between 'pleasure' and 'peace'? You know you have 'pleasure,' but you cannot go into little, quiet places where there is 'peace'. 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.'

If we may compare them, 'pleasantness' is like a rose which grows in open places; 'peace' is like a little violet which grows in the shade. Which will you like best—the rose of 'pleasure,' or the violet of 'peace'? You see here we are to have them both: 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace'.

I will point out one very important word. Do you know which it is? 'All'—'All her paths are peace'. Do you think we can say that of anything in the world besides? Is anything else 'all peace'? Have you not generally something to disappoint? Somebody is unkind? There comes some sting afterwards in most things. But here, 'all her paths are peace'.

Will you turn to Proverbs x. 22—it is a beautiful verse, let us all read it together—'The blessing of the



Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it'. Now turn to Psalm cxix. 165—all these three texts mean the same thing—'Great peace have they which love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them'.

'All her ways are peace'. I think some people make a great mistake about religion. When they talk about religion they are always saying, 'Don't—don't'; and 'You mustn't—you mustn't'. I know that persons go to a little child in the nursery and say, 'You mustn't play with your playthings to-day—it is Sunday. You mustn't take a walk to-day—it is Sunday. You mustn't do this, and you mustn't do that.'

This is not the right way to talk. This is not religion. You should say to the little child in the nursery, 'Here are some pretty little pictures for Sunday, and pretty toys, different to others. You may take a walk if you like, and you may go to church if you like. Sunday is the happiest day of the week.'

Some people speak thus to a boy about religion, 'Oh, don't be religious'; and his own heart and the devil say the same: 'If you are religious you must give up all your pleasures; if you are a religious boy you mustn't shout or play about so much; you must never go to a ball or to a theatre, and a great many other things you must not do if you become religious,' as if religion was giving all up.

I should say to a boy, 'If you are a religious boy you will have much pleasanter companions than worldly and wicked ones, and you will find their society much sweeter; you will have a great many new pleasures, such as you have no idea of. Now it will be very nice to do good things; it will be better than all other things. I do not say you mustn't buy tarts and cakes, but I will show you a pleasanter way of spending your money. I do not say you mustn't go here, nor you mustn't go there; but I say, for everything God takes away He gives something better in its place.' 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'

If a boy has a stick in his hand you may not succeed in wrenching it from him; but if you offer him an apple he will immediately drop the stick. Therefore give up worldly things, because something better is before you. I do not think persons act rightly about religion; and I do not wonder at boys thinking it a forbidding, dull, and stupid thing.

Now we are going to look at 'pleasant' things in religion. It is a very pleasant thing (is it not?) to walk in the sun. Now, if you are religious through your life, you are always walking in the sunshine. Look at John viii. 12, Jesus says, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'. I will tell you what it means. If you love Jesus Christ and walk where you are following Him you will be on the sunny side of everything; you will not be on the dark side of the hedge but on the sunny side. You will see everything in sunshine, you will have a happy

feeling in your heart which will make everything look sunny.

Sometimes you may take a walk through a dull part of the country, but if you have an agreeable friend as your companion, and you have a pleasant conversation as you go along, it makes the walk 'pleasant'. If you are religious you will always have a 'pleasant' Friend with you. Do you not remember what the two disciples said who walked with Jesus to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32, 'Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?' And if you turn to the Song of Solomon you will read a beautiful verse, chapter viii. 5, 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?' Must it not be a happy walk when we are 'leaning upon Christ'?

Therefore you see it is always a sunny walk; and a walk with the best Friend in the whole world. It must be very 'pleasant'—and 'a path of peace'.

Now look at some of the things which make it so 'pleasant'; and then we will look at the little, quiet, retired, violet 'paths of peace'.

I am going to speak first about 'the ways'—open things; things we do with other people; like the public road; then I shall talk of the little quiet 'paths' where we go alone. Do you understand that?

Will you turn to Psalm cxxxiii. 1, and you will see one of the 'pleasant' things. 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' Who makes brothers and sisters agree and never quarrel? Who makes school-fellows agree and never quarrel? The God of love. There must be 'peace' and love in a heart where God is. If there is quarrelling in a house—if brothers and sisters quarrel—it is because God is not there. 'He maketh men to be of one mind in a house.' It is such a pleasant sight to see brothers and sisters unselfish; not always wishing the best for themselves, but for others; not speaking crossly, but striving to make each other happy. 'How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?' When all assemble around the fire or table in love, and are happy together.

That is one of the 'pleasant' things—now we will look at another. If I see a boy or girl go out to do some little act of kindness, there is no 'pleasure' like it. Try it. I think you have tried it a little, but not so much as you might. Try if it will not make you every day more happy if you do little acts of kindness to somebody. It may be to some companions or sick persons—you go and read and speak kindly to them. It may be any little thing—no matter how little. You will find it is the 'pleasantest' thing in all the world.

Now I must tell you about a little boy—they used to call him 'Little Robby'. He was a kind little boy—always trying to make others happy; and one thing he used to be always saying was this, 'Come, children, come!' If they asked him, 'Where,

Robby?' he would say, 'Come to heaven.' Little Robby became ill, and when he lay on a sick-bed, he was always saying, 'Come! come!' 'Where, Robby?' 'To heaven.' He said, 'Come, papa! Come, mamma! Come, little children! Come!' 'Where?' 'To heaven.' He went on saying it again and again; at last, through his sickness, his little voice grew fainter and fainter; and the last words little Robby ever said were, 'Come! come!' very softly. When his little brother went into his room, after he was dead, he said, 'It is such a pleasant place, mamma; it is all glory'. Was not that a 'way of pleasantness'?

Now I will tell you another thing. It is a very 'pleasant' thing to be very busy. I do not know how you find it during the holidays; they are very nice, but they are not 'pleasant' if they last too long. They are very stupid things if you have not some games to play or something to do. The fact is, as God has made us, we are never happy unless we are busy. The angels in heaven are very busy, they never rest. Jesus Christ was always busy when He was upon this earth. All God's people are busy. A person that is not busy never can be happy.

Two things you ought to be busy about. One is with your own heart—to keep it in good order, to pull up the weeds, to watch over yourselves, and to conquer yourselves. It is like having in your heart a little garden—a nice thing to keep is a little garden. You are always to be busy; and it will be very 'pleasant' to feel that the weeds are fewer, and the heart is getting into order. Self-victory is a very great 'pleasure'.

Another thing that you are to be busy about is your duty, no matter what it is. It may be to learn Latin and Greek, to learn your lessons well; if in business, to do your duty. You know what it is. God will show it to you. Whatever your duty is, be busy about it.

Somebody has said that every one of us is like a harp with a great many strings. I will tell you what he meant. You must always play in concert, everything must be kept in concert. If anything is out of concert it will be very bad.

There is your heart, one of the strings there must be holy thoughts; if a bad thought comes in it is like a string out of tune. Then your words must be gentle, kind words. If a boy or girl speaks cross or angry words it is out of tune; it spoils the concert. Then your feet must walk in the right path—they must go on errands of kindness; if they go a wrong way the concert is broken. Your hands must be full of good works. If the hand strikes, the hand is out of tune. You have to keep all in tune, in concert; your thoughts, your words, your steps, and your actions with your hands. Take care that nothing gets out of tune; but that all is in good harmony, that there be sweet music, nothing jarring.

Is there no note wrong? Look at your thoughts, your words, your works, your hands; are they in concert? What a 'pleasant' thing is sweet music when all goes nice, when the harmony is not marred. It

will be thus with you if you keep all right within. It will be sweet music, perhaps sweeter to God than angels' songs!

One thing more I have to say about 'pleasant ways'. If ever you went to Switzerland, or to any other place where there are high mountains, and you stayed there a little while—till you came to love those beautiful snow mountains—when you returned to England and saw again its lovely scenery, you would feel, 'All this is very pretty; but I do so miss those beautiful snow mountains that seemed to touch the skies!'

I think it is very often so with us and the things of the world—if there is no heaven in the background, everything is tame; but we want the snow mountains; we want something all around that should seem to crown it all; for how beautiful soever earthly things may be, and how 'pleasant' soever, still they are dark—because there is no eternity, there is no heaven, there are no snow mountains. If we have these, even in the background, it makes everything so 'pleasant'.

I have read of a little boy who slept in a room that looked towards the East, and every morning he jumped out of bed and went to the window, saying, 'Christ is coming! Christ is coming!' Happy little boy! His first thought every morning was, 'Christ is coming—coming from the East'.

Mr. Hitchcock, a learned man in America, mentions in one of his sermons a remarkable thing. He was preaching upon what he called 'The dignity of the Christian'; and he told this little fact, that in Virginia he once went down a very deep mine indeed, where of course it was pitch dark; himself, and those accompanying him, were creeping along with their little candles when they heard some sweet singing; they did not know whence it came, but went in the direction whence it sounded, and they came to a very old man.

Now I will tell you about this old man. He was a slave and was blind. He had his eyes put out by the blasting of gunpowder in the mine. He was very old, and I will tell you what he did every day. Below in this mine a door was kept shut to prevent the bad air from coming up; but when cars had to pass it was obliged to be opened—for they have railways in these mines. This old man had to open this gate, which he could do by feeling.

Year after year this old blind slave had remained in this dark, cold, miserable mine, doing nothing else than opening the door when the cars went past. And yet he was singing so sweetly a very beautiful verse called, 'Heaven in the Morning'. Though blind, he looked so happy; and they asked him to sing his song again, 'Heaven in the Morning', which he did. It was an odd place to find a Christian—a dark mine—for, though a poor blind slave, he was such; and he was very happy, because he felt sure of 'Heaven in the Morning'. 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness.'

Now we must look at 'the paths'—they are better

still. I will tell you of a sweet little 'path'—to feel God's forgiveness. Do you know that? Can you say, 'God has forgiven me all my sins for Jesus Christ's sake'? It is such a sweet little 'path'. It is 'a path the vulture's eye hath not seen'. It is a sweet feeling. 'God has forgiven me my sin.' I wish you to have that every night when you go to bed.

Shall I give you a pillow to go to sleep on? I am going to put a great many things into the pillow; and I hope you will never go to sleep without it. I recommend you to put into your pillow first a little text—perhaps it will be best if it is a promise. Next put into your pillow a verse of a hymn. The third thing I should recommend would be a little prayer; I do not mean your prayer out of bed, but a short, little prayer after you get into bed, whatever you like. Then a fourth thing, feel in your own conscience you are trying to do what is right. Then a fifth thing you must feel, because your conscience will be sure to tell you that you have done wrong, that the blood of Jesus Christ must pardon you and wash away your sin. Then a sixth thing you must feel, 'I am going to try hard to do something good to-morrow morning better than to-day'. And the seventh and last is, you must just take a little glance at Jesus Christ before going to sleep. Try to stuff your pillow with these seven things, and see if you do not have a sweet sleep. Do not forget them.

I will tell you another 'pleasant, peaceful path'. Indeed I have almost said it already. But I mean, have a quiet conscience. It is a sad thing when the conscience is not quiet.

Perhaps some in this church this afternoon have not a quiet conscience. They have done something very wrong. I do not know what it is; but God knows and you know. You have not peace; for you have no reason to believe that God has forgiven you. Your conscience is not happy, and you cannot enjoy anything. The only way you can enjoy anything is for your conscience to get hardened; but you will never truly enjoy anything, if you are a Christian till conscience is quiet.

You know the children of Israel could not enjoy 'the lamb' unless they knew 'the blood' was on 'the doorposts'. Oh, get rid of sin, if you would have a quiet conscience! 'Let the little bird sing sweetly in the bosom,' as Matthew Henry says.

One more thing I must mention, a sweet little 'path of peace.' The disciples, it is said, 'went and told Jesus'. It is such a sweet little 'path' to be in the habit of going and telling Jesus Christ everything. He likes you to do so, and you will like it when you have done it. Wherever you are feel God is with you. You can tell God everything.

Did you ever read about little Johnny being lost in the great wood all night? but in the morning he was found. He was asked, 'Were you not frightened? What did you do?' He said, 'It grew dark, and Johnny said, "God take care of little Johnny."' And then he slept all night, not at all frightened, be-

cause he had told God that he was there. That was real faith, a 'path of peace'.

There were some Indians, of whom I have read, who talked some time ago in an old Indian's hut; and the conversation turned on this, 'Which is the most pleasant season of the year, winter, spring, summer, or autumn?' I do not know which you like best; but I will tell you what the old Indian said.

'Did you notice,' said he to the other Indians, 'as you came here, a number of trees around my hut?' 'Yes,' they replied. He said, 'Well, when it is spring, then you know the pretty buds come out in those trees, and I think, How beautiful is spring! When the summer comes there is the sweet foliage, and birds sing on the trees, and I think, How beautiful is summer! When autumn comes there is a beautiful tint upon the leaves, and nice ripe fruit, and I think, How beautiful is autumn! But when winter comes, and there are no leaves, and no fruit, and no singing of birds, I can better look up through the leafless branches and see the stars, and then I say, How beautiful is winter!' Was not that beautiful? I hope you will all be able to 'look up through the leafless branches and see the stars'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### HOLDFAST

'Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.'—PROVERBS IV. 13.

1. The take hold of faith.
2. The holdfast of truth.
3. The keep hold of life.
4. The freehold of grace.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 110.

#### KEEPING THE HEART

'Keep thy heart with diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'—PROVERBS IV. 23.

ALL wise people (and I want you all to be very wise) like to go deeply into a thing; they like to go to the root of a thing. What is your root? Where is it? Your 'heart' is the root. It is the root of everything.

If you like we will see where God says so. Turn to Luke vi. 45. Everything that is good or bad comes first out of the 'heart'. Let us read this verse: 'A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh'. Everything, then, comes out of the 'heart'. I know that some people try to hide their hearts, and they fancy nobody can tell what they are thinking of, or feeling; and they try to put on a countenance so that no one may know what they are thinking about. But it certainly will come out at last.

Shall I tell you about a little boy and his watch? A little boy had a very nice watch, but it would not go right. It had a very pretty case, and face; but it sometimes went too fast, and sometimes too slow. He asked his mother what he should do about it.



She told him to take it to the watchmaker's. He did so; and he said, 'Master John (the little boy's name was John Wilson), it has its hands all right, but it will not go right. Therefore leave it with me, and come again in a few days, and I will tell you what is the matter with it'. John went again to him in a few days, and the watchmaker said to him, 'I opened your watch, and I found there was the right number of wheels, and pins, and screws; but I found a little part called "the spring" which was wrong; it had a bad spring, and because the mainspring was wrong, it sometimes went too fast, and sometimes too slow'.

Now, I think, you are all like watches. Something within you goes tick, tick, and you have hands and inside works. But how do you go? Sometimes too fast, and sometimes too slow. Does not the tongue sometimes go too fast or too slow? Are not the feet sometimes too fast or too slow? Are not the hands sometimes going wrong? How is this? Let us examine—though I am not the watchmaker—God is the watchmaker: the mainspring is the heart. Now we must look at the mainspring, the heart, 'for out of it are the issues of life'. Everything in you depends upon your 'heart'. God always looks most at the 'heart'.

Now as it is so important to 'keep the heart' right, I want to try to help you to do so by giving you a little advice thereupon. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.'

I do not know whether you do what I sometimes do; I look at the side of my Bible, in the margin; and reading that helps me to understand more fully the Scripture. Now it does not say in the margin, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence,' but 'Keep thy heart *above* all keeping'. It is most important to keep your thoughts; but it is most important to 'keep your heart'—'Keep thy heart above all keeping; for out of it are the issues of life'.

Before I begin to give you a little advice about it, I will tell you something about two pictures. I can only tell you what I have heard about them—not knowing whether what is said is true; but I know the pictures are to be seen in the picture galleries.

It is said that a great painter some time ago wanted to paint a picture of Innocence: so he had a little tiny boy brought to him, that knelt before him, and put up his little hands towards heaven to pray. He had pretty little rosy cheeks, and beautiful blue eyes, and was such a representation of Innocence that the painter made a picture of him; and, when finished, hung it up in his room.

Many years after, he thought, 'I wish I had a picture of Guilt—for that is a pretty one of Innocence, and I should like the opposite,' and he thought, 'How shall I manage? I will go to the prison of the town, and ask the keeper to let me go to the worst man, and take a likeness of him'. He went to the prison and asked to see the worst man there. He was shown a man who had committed murder. His eye was fierce, and his brow was hardened; and he was a complete picture of wretchedness. He sat down

and painted it. He took it home, and hung it beside the other. One he named Rupert, and the other Randal.

But what do you think he found out? Why, that Rupert was Randal, and Randal was Rupert—that the man he had painted in the prison to represent Guilt was the same person as he had painted, when a little boy, for Innocence. When little, he had a soft heart; but as he grew up he went into bad company—took to drinking, became a thief, liar, a murderer! and at last was hanged. Randal the felon was the former Rupert the innocent. If Rupert had 'kept his heart with all diligence,' he would not have been the guilty Randal in old age!

I. If you would 'keep' your garden, you must often look into it. It is a very nice thing before you go to bed at night to look into your garden—that is a very good time; but I do not mean that you are only then to do it, but make it a rule, before you get into bed, to look into your garden. And I will tell you what you will find there—every day there will grow lumps of weeds; however well you may have weeded it yesterday, you will find more weeds to-day. Pull them out!

II. Then another thing—you must water it. This wants doing very often. Do you know what I mean? If not, look at the fourth of John, to what Jesus Christ said about water, and what it is. Bring the Holy Spirit into your heart. Pray that God will pour good thoughts—His grace—into your heart: that is water.

I will tell you about a little boy who kept his garden just as I was saying. He lived in Switzerland, but was an English boy—his name was John; he was called there Jean. He liked very much to look at the mountains of Switzerland, and used to say, 'How beautiful is Mont Blanc! God is greater than Mont Blanc.'

He was a dear little boy; but one day he quarrelled with his little brother. I cannot, and I should not like to tell you how it was, but he became very cross; and when he went to bed at night, he was very unhappy because he had quarrelled with his little brother. He turned first on one side and then on the other; he could not go to sleep, because he did not feel happy. What do you think he did? The best thing a boy could do—he jumped out of bed in the dark, and knelt down by the side of his bed, and said, 'O God, forgive me for having been unkind to my little brother—forgive me for Christ's sake'.

When he grew up (his name was John Fletcher—one of the holiest men that ever lived) in after life he said, 'On that night when I went to bed again, I felt the first real peace I had ever felt. I have often felt it since in my mind! but that was the first time I ever felt the peace of God in my heart'. He used to 'keep his heart'.

III. Now another thing, we ought to keep it like a citadel. Supposing you were a soldier or were guarding any citadel that was besieged: you would have to take great care that the enemy did not come in.

How shall we 'keep our hearts'? Let us put some sentinels—we will have two. What shall their names be? Prayer and Watchfulness. These two sentinels have to 'keep the heart'.

You know if in time of war a sentinel goes to sleep, he is to be shot. And, remember, it is a time of war now, I do not mean in India; but at Brighton—in this church. Everybody is fighting. When you were baptised, you said you would 'fight (your godfathers and godmothers promised for you) against the world, the flesh, and the devil' till you died. It is a time of war—therefore the sentinels must not go to sleep. Prayer and Watchfulness must not stop, but go up and down, be always moving.

Let me give you a little hint. You will find it a very useful thing often to lift up a little prayer in your heart. I do not mean only morning and evening; but any time, when you think enemies are coming in, likely to take your citadel, lift up a prayer that you may be faithful. A little boy may be at play, or a little girl sitting at needlework, but each can offer a little prayer, 'Lord, show me what I ought to do!' Nobody would know anything about it but God. That is the sentinel of Prayer.

I once knew a private soldier in the Coldstream Guards. At that time there was a great deal of religious feeling among the soldiers. They were Wesleyan Methodists. Six or seven of them were religious men. The others laughed at them and teased them. But, finding they lost their temper, they agreed among themselves to have a little watchword; and so, when one saw another getting out of temper, or doing anything wrong, he would come and whisper in his ears the watchword, which was, 'Watch!' This did a great deal of good—it helped to keep them on their guard; and the soldier who told me this afterwards became an infant school teacher, and wrote one of the best books on the subject that ever was written. He used to go about with the others and say, 'Watch, Watch'.

Peter the Great, Czar of Russia, did not watch. I will tell you what he did. In 1722 he made a law that none of his subjects should ever strike a slave; if he did so he should be punished. A little while after Peter was walking in his garden, and a slave offended him—he took up his stick and struck him a blow. Peter is said to have made use of these words: 'I have conquered many nations—I have given good laws to my own citizens, but I have not been able to govern myself. I have found it more difficult to keep my own heart than the whole Russian empire.'

IV. Let me tell you a few more things how to 'keep your heart'. Do you remember when Elisha went to Jericho, and the waters were bad, what Elisha did? Will you look at 2 Kings ii. 20, 21. Elisha put some salt in the spring where the bad waters came from, and the water was all made good. If you want to make the streams good, you must make the spring good. What shall you do? Put salt, that is the grace of God, into your heart, which is the spring of everything. That is a piece of advice to you.

There was a very dear little girl once, who was called Mary. One day she was very selfish, and her mother read to her that text, 'For even Christ pleased not Himself'; and it made her think, 'I often please myself, rather than please other people'.

Now I will tell you what happened a few days afterwards. Before going to bed she sat on her mother's lap and said to her, 'I want to tell you something'. 'Well, Mary, what have you to tell me?' 'Oh, mamma,' she replied, 'I used to be so selfish; and one thing in particular I used to be very selfish about. When I saw grandmother I used to think her cross, and she used to tell me to do things I did not like, and sometimes I refused; and often I did them in a cross way. But when you talked to me about Jesus "pleasing not Himself," I thought I would try to be like Him; and the next time before going into her house, I went to the lilac-tree which is outside, and asked God to help me to be unselfish. Then I went into the house, and looked about to see what grandmother could want, and I soon found out; and before she asked me I ran and did it; and, Oh, mamma, as I came back I had such beautiful feelings.' This was because she conquered herself. She did the right thing. She asked God to help her, that was putting in salt at the spring.

Try to be unselfish—ask God to help you—try to please Him, and see if you will not have beautiful feelings.

If you want to 'keep your heart,' do not let there be any empty corners therein. God likes all boys and girls to be employed—sometimes at their lessons, sometimes at play; sometimes helping somebody, thinking, reading, or playing, to be always employed.

If you ever visit North America, you will probably go to see the Falls of Niagara, and the guide will show you a particular spot where a sad thing once happened. A young lady went to see those beautiful falls. She went just beside where the water falls over the rocks, and saw a flower a little way down the precipice, which she imagined she could reach; she thought, 'Oh what a proud thing it would be to pick a flower from the Falls of Niagara, and carry it home to England!' Her friends said, 'Do not try!' She was obstinately resolved to do it. She leaned over to pick the flower. She could not reach it. Her friends said, 'Come back! Come back!' She was headstrong, and listened not to their voice. She leaned still further over the precipice, the green soil gave way, and she was precipitated, like a falling star, down to the bottom, and carried away by the rushing torrent! She was killed in desiring a dangerous flower!

Many boys and girls want dangerous flowers. They want to enjoy the amusements of the world, and its vain, sinful pleasures. Take care that you do not find them like the Niagara flower, that, in striving after them, you fall down the abyss!

One thing more. Have you not sometimes, when anybody has given you anything uncommonly valuable, taken it to your father and said, 'It is too

precious for me to keep, I am afraid of losing it, do take care of it for me?' It is very wise for boys and girls to do this with their treasures. Oh, that you would do this with your heart! You cannot 'keep' it yourself, therefore often take it to God, ask Him to keep your heart. 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain' (Is. cxxvii. 1). And again David says, 'Lord, keep my heart'. And there is a beautiful verse in Isaiah (xxvii. 3). Often offer this prayer, 'Lord, keep my heart for me'; and then read this verse, which is an answer thereto, 'I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### TWISTED

*Object—A piece of twisted wire*

'Look straight before thee.'—PROVERBS IV. 25, 26.

ONE of the most interesting items at a local agricultural exhibition was wire-twisting and straining, for the construction of cattle fencing. One onlooker was heard to say, 'Ah! there is a good deal of wire-pulling going on in certain quarters to-day'.

Now, out of that remark, I am anxious to twist out a little address **twisted**.

**I. Sometimes Words are Twisted.**—I heard some one say, 'Don't take any notice of what Jack says, he is a regular twister, his word is not to be depended upon'. Do you not remember how that in the Book of Acts a story is told of a man who, on coming to pay his taxes, kept back part of the price of the land. Peter, who was the receiver, saw that Ananias was attempting deception, and said, 'Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men but unto God. Ananias, hearing these words, dropped *dead*.'

**II. Sometimes Influence is Twisted.**—No one is unimportant in the world; we all yield a measure of influence for weal or woe.

It is a simple illustration, but will help the tiny tots to understand my point better. We stand before a still lake, there is not a ripple on the surface of the water, yet at will we may alter the gravity of nature by casting a stone into the centre and creating rings that widen till they reach the bank. A single slip may spoil many lives.

The influence of a true man never dies.

**III. Sometimes Resolutions are Twisted.**—'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways' (James i. 8).

I was struck with a trade sign of a general merchant; it read: 'Dealer in everything under the sun'. I thought, 'Jack of all trades and master of none'. How often we hear the lament, I intended to do better, but have failed. Have *you* a resolve? Is it to serve the Lord?

Does He find you ever true,  
Can the Lord depend on you?

—A. G. WELLER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 102.

### THE GREATEST BUILDER IN THE WORLD

*Object—Picture of the Eiffel Tower*

'Go to the ant; . . . consider her ways.'—PROVERBS VI. 6.

It seems extravagant to say that the termite, or African white ant, is, without doubt, the greatest builder in the world; yet such the following facts prove. This ant has its home in Africa, living in large numbers throughout that warm continent. Every ant-community is thoroughly organised, having, we are told, besides its regular classes of inhabitants, special classes of soldiers and builders. Latreille states that the new inhabitants added each year to a community number about thirty millions! Out of the whole number living together, the comparatively large class called builders are the most interesting. These builders are without either wings or eyes, they being bestowed upon the other classes in the community. Yet they construct what may be well termed the most wonderful buildings in the world; for though these buildings, or cone-shaped hills, measure on the average only twelve feet in height, compared with the size and strength of the individual ant, any one of them is proportionately greater than either the Ferris Wheel or the Eiffel Tower, built by man!

The native African not infrequently climbs to the top of the termite house, and from that point can keep sharp lookout, in time of danger, against the foes of his tribe. Likewise the leader of a herd of wild African cattle posts himself upon the termite house, finding a secure footing and a good view of surroundings.

The only material used by the termite is 'earth softened in the jaws of the worker, which dries quickly and becomes very hard'.

The interior of the cone is most intelligently constructed, with inner domes, supporting pillars, spiral galleries leading to the ground, shorter passages leading everywhere—to the nurseries in which the little ants are kept, to the store-rooms and granaries, and to all entrances above or below ground.

The termite mother feeds her little ones upon bits of dried crumbling wood, with occasional side-dishes of different kinds of tree-gum, and drinks of water and vegetable juice. The dried wood is the staple article of their diet, while the gum and the juice, when furnished, serve the young termites in the place of sweetmeats, such as jam, sweets, and sugar.

Now it is this very appetite for wood which makes the termite tribe useful in removing large quantities of dried, decayed material. But in many instances it seems to lead this ant to great destructiveness; for, leaving the old wood which he may always find in abundance, he attacks the fresh timbers in newly erected houses, eating out the fibre until the houses one after another become very unsafe, and must be repaired or taken down altogether.

We should like to stop to tell you of the termite soldier, that big ant, with great jaws and claws, who tears lazy workers that resist discipline all to pieces; who fights the ants of other tribes, and even birds



and snakes. But we have given enough to show that when Solomon said, 'Go to the ant,' in order that we might 'consider her ways' and so learn to be 'wise,' he had strong reason for giving us the advice.—G. V. REICHEL, *What Shall I Tell the Children?* p. 139.

### THE ANT

'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.'—PROVERBS VI. 6-8.

The wisdom taught by the ant is threefold.

I. **The Wisdom of Work.**—If it be the hand of the diligent that maketh rich, the ants deserve to flourish; for there are few sluggards in their nest. The great mass of the teeming population is called 'the workers'. There may be a few males and females in each community dressed in four beautiful gauze wings, and no doubt regarding themselves as very superior members of the society—the veritable aristocracy of ant life—but they never touch the work with one of their little fingers. The keeping of the nest, the gathering of the food, the care of the eggs, and the rearing of the young ants, all devolves on the shoulders of the willing workers; and they, though they have no wings at all, and are called 'neutrals' and some other ugly names, cheerfully undertake the whole labour, and make the entire community flourish through sheer hard work.

And that is a splendid lesson for all young people. All great men, as well as all true ants, have been hard workers. This is the only royal road to success. What Sir Joshua Reynolds said to his students is equally true when applied to other professions: 'You must be told again and again that labour is the only price of solid fame, and that whatever your force of genius may be, there is no easy method of becoming a good painter. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour; nothing is to be obtained without it.' Jesus Himself was a hard worker. Go, learn of the ant, and be wise.

II. **The Wisdom of Self-Reliance.**—Solomon adds that the ants carry on their labours without 'guide, overseer, or ruler,' and that is strictly the case. The ants are a feeble people, but they are perfectly self-reliant. The bees, for instance, have a royal personage in their hive. We call her the *queen*. And thus we may speak of bees as we speak of ourselves, as living under a monarchical government. But the ants have no king or queen. There is no royal personage in their nest. They are rather to be regarded as staunch republicans, who carry on their labours without any 'ruler,' guided simply by that unerring instinct which imitates the actings of reason. The silly sheep may require a shepherd to take care of them, but the sagacious ants can take care of themselves.

And all boys who are worth their salt must try to learn the same lesson. They must learn to strike out a path for themselves, and not be content to eat the bread of idleness. Self-reliance is not selfishness,

manly independence is not ignorant braggadocio. The ants toil for the common weal. They rely on one another.

III. **The Wisdom of Making Provision for the Future.**—'They prepare their meat in the summer.' This fact has been denied by modern entomologists. They have told us that ants are dormant in winter (at least in Europe), and, therefore, stand in no need of food. But, as one reminds us, 'we had need to be very sure of our facts when we attempt to correct the Spirit of God' (Gosse). It has been amply ascertained that in the East and other warm countries where hibernation is impossible, ants do store up for winter use. It is even stated that these harvesting ants bite off the radicle at the end of the seed to prevent its germinating, and occasionally bring up their stores to the surface to dry, when the tiny granary has been entered and soaked by the rain.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 7.

### THE LAMP THAT NEVER GOES OUT

PROVERBS VI. 28.

A BEAUTIFUL thing is a good lamp when the oil is pure, and the wick well trimmed, and the flame burns clear and bright: as beautiful as it is ingenious and useful. Yet, after all, what poor things are our most splendid artificial lights—even the electric light itself—compared with that wonderful and glorious lamp which God's own hand has hung up in the sky, which lights half the world at once, and sends its beams to other worlds—the Sun! When the lamp of day is kindled in the East, our lamps and candles seem to say, 'We are not wanted now; we can go out'. The twinkling stars fade in the sky. The flowers open on every hill-side and in every meadow. Life wakes up from slumber; and the fresh morning seems so full of joy that we could fancy the sun himself rejoicing as he pours out such a flood of light and warmth on all living things. And so the Psalmist says the morning sun is 'a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race'.

Now, can you tell what is that *light* which shines brighter than the sun—shining not only into the eyes, but into the understanding and heart and conscience; which never sets like the sun, or burns dim or goes out and wants trimming and re-lighting like a lamp of man's making; which gives us more light the more we use it; shines brightest when trouble makes life seem dark and gloomy, and can light us even through the dark valley of the shadow of death, to the very gate of heaven?

It is the light of truth in God's holy word; of which King Solomon says, 'The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light'; and of which the Psalmist says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path' (Prov. vi. 28; Ps. cxix. 105). Thus God's word is like sunlight, because it is so glorious, and comforting, and wide-reaching, and searching, and needful to show us the way we have to walk in and the work we have to do; and also

like a lamp or lantern, because we can hold it in our hand, make it our own, and use it in the smallest as well as the greatest concerns of life, just as though God meant it for us only.

Let us talk a little about this Divine Lamp; and first of all note that it is—

I. **A Light on the Path.**—Life, you know, is often compared to a journey or pilgrimage. Joy and happiness are like sunshine lighting up the landscape. Troubles and trials are like clouds and storms. Difficulties are like rough and steep parts of the road, which try our breath and test our strength: 'uphill work' we often say. Temptations are like miry, slippery places, where if we do not walk heedfully we shall get a fall. Duty is the right road, and sin and folly are wandering from the road—climbing over the hedge, or turning into a side path that will lead us astray. Childhood and youth are the pleasant morning hours when we begin our journey, with the dew on the wayside flowers, and the lark singing in the clear sky overhead. Middle life is the hot, dusty noon, when the traveller is glad now and then to rest awhile under some shady tree by a clear-springing fountain. Old age is the eventide, when we descend the hill; heaven is the home to which, if we are in the right way, every step brings us nearer. And what is death? Death is the sunset, when the journey must end; but to the true Christian it is not a winter sunset, followed by a long dark night, but only such a sunset as they have in the far north at midsummer, when the golden sun just dips down behind the horizon, and in a few moments rises again.

Now there are two methods of taking a journey. One is, to choose the right road, be it rugged mountain footpath or smooth highway, and to keep in it till we reach our journey's end. The other is, to climb fences, force a way through gaps in hedges, trespass across fields, leap ditches, scramble up and down pathless steeps, and thus choose our own way. There is great fun, I think I hear you say, in this random sort of travelling. I don't deny it, if you are out for a holiday stroll, and have plenty of time, to ramble where you please. But life is not a holiday ramble, but a serious journey, for our Saviour teaches that it must end either in heaven or in hell; either in His presence, 'where there is fulness of joy,' or in 'outer darkness,' where there shall be 'weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth'. And there is no time to spare; because the youngest may only have a few steps left of his journey; and because the oldest Christian will tell you how sorry he is to have wasted even one day in which he might have glorified his dear Lord and Master, and done good to others.

So you see the only safe and happy thing is to begin life's journey in the right way, and to keep in it, fearing to take even one step out of it.

When the gospel was first preached to the Saxons of Northumbria, by Paulinus (as we read in Bede's *History*), and King Edwin sat in Council with his chiefs and wise men, to consult whether they should give up their idols and believe in the Lord Jesus

Christ, one of the Councillors arose and spoke thus: 'In winter, O King, when thou art sitting in thy hall at supper, with a great fire burning, and thy nobles and commanders around thee, sometimes a little bird flies through the hall, in at one window and out at another. The moment of his passage is sweet to him, for he feels neither cold nor tempest; but it is short, and from the dark winter he vanishes into the dark winter again. Such, O King, seems to me the short life of man; for we know not whence we came or whither we go. If, therefore, this new doctrine can teach us anything certain, let us embrace it.' And so Edwin and his people came out of the dark winter of heathenism into the glorious light of the gospel, and became Christians, and destroyed their idols; just as in our own day has been done in Madagascar, and in many of the South Sea Islands. So our Saviour's own preaching is described: 'The people who sat in darkness saw great light; and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up' (Matt. iv. 16).

This heavenly lamp is

II. **A Light upon the Past.**—The Bible shows us how Man began his journey, created 'in the image of God,' and happy in loving and obeying God. It shows us *his first wrong step*, and how one wrong act opened the door to sin, and misery, and death. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.' Some people think it very hard that Adam should be condemned for *one sin*, or at any rate for so trifling an act as gathering and eating fruit. They forget that there can be no such thing as a *trifling sin*. The action may be trifling, but sin is no trifle. It is disobedience to God. To pull a trigger and fire off a pistol is as easy and slight an action as to pick and eat a fruit; but if the pistol is loaded, and pointed at anyone, it is murder. One sin (as St. James teaches us) breaks God's law as truly as many sins: just as the breaking one link of a chain severs the chain as completely as if many links were broken. Besides, one sin cannot stand alone: it leads to others. Sin is like leaven; or like dry-rot in a building; or like fever-poison: it spreads. It is like seed. One tiny thistle-down, sown and springing up, would in a few years be the parent of so many thistles, each having thousands of seeds, that if unchecked they would by and by cover the whole earth. So *one sin*—a small action, but a great sin—was the beginning of all the sin in the world, and of all the sorrow and pain that spring from sin. 'For the wages of sin is death.'

Thus the word of God, teaching us how sin, from a small beginning, grows, and spreads, and ends in death, is **A Warning Light**.

On the Eddystone Rock (as I dare say you know) stands a lofty tower called a lighthouse. The top of the tower is a huge lantern, the light in which is kindled every evening at dusk, and shines all night through, sending its beams for miles and miles over the sea. When fierce tempests rage, the waves sometimes run up the tower and break in spray over its top; but they cannot put out the light. The tower

was built there for the sake of the light. But of what use is the light? It is a *light of warning*. Before the lighthouse was built, many a gallant ship struck on that rock, and thousands of brave mariners perished. Now the faithful light says to the sailors, as the ships come sailing on through the darkness: 'Beware! Come not here. Turn into the harbour, or keep out to sea, and you will be safe. But keep clear of this rock, or you will perish.' And if the crew of any vessel despised the warning, and tried *how close to the rock* they could sail, and the ship struck on the rock and went down with all on board—whose fault would it be? Their own. No one's else. If they had obeyed the warning light they would have been saved.

The Bible is God's lighthouse, to warn us of the treacherous rocks of sin, on which we are in danger of being wrecked. It is God's beacon-light, warning us to be on our guard against the assaults of temptation, and the power and craft of that great enemy of our souls, from whom we can be safe only when we 'put on the whole armour of God'.

III. This glorious lamp, of which we are talking, is something still better and more hopeful than a warning light. It is

**A Saving Light.**—In the land of Israel, in old times, there were six Cities of Refuge. Anyone who had by mischance slain some one might flee to one of these cities and be safe from the avenger. The roads to the cities were made very plain, with bridges across every stream, and at every turn a way-post with the words 'Refuge! Refuge!' But the fugitive would have to flee by day; or if the dark night overtook him on the way, he must have a lamp. The road would be of no use to him if he could not see it. So the gospel shows us 'the way of salvation,' by which we must 'flee for refuge.' It is

A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.

Near the city of Rome are deep underground caverns and passages, where in ancient times the persecuted Christians met secretly for worship; and where they buried their dead in vaults hewn in the rock. They are called the Catacombs. The passages are so numerous that it is said their length altogether may be a hundred miles. If you ventured in without a guide and a light, you would soon be lost; and you might wander on and on till you sank and died with hunger and weariness. You would never find your way out. A whole party of travellers was once so lost. But suppose a lost wanderer in that dark dreary labyrinth were to think—*God knows the way out*, and were to pray earnestly that God would show him the way. And suppose, while he was praying, a guide drew near, with a lamp, who had come in quest of him. How joyfully he would follow that guide! How beautiful the light of that lamp would seem to him! Suppose they passed a chamber filled with thousands of gold and silver, and the guide said, 'Shall we stop here and be rich?' He would

reply, 'Stop here! not for a moment! What good is silver and gold to me? I want to get out into the daylight, and to find my way home!' And when he saw the daylight, at first like a dim star at the end of a long passage, but clearer and brighter at every step, how eagerly he would hasten towards it! With what joy he would breathe the fresh air, and climb out of the pit's mouth into the warm bright sunshine, and see the sky overhead, and behold the path leading to his home!

Remember, that as the wanderer in the Catacombs would need not only a lamp but a guide, so the Holy Spirit is the Guide, without whose teaching even the Bible would be but a dark lantern. For what says St. Paul? 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. iv. 6).

IV. This glorious lamp is **A Light for Every Step.**—If you were travelling among the Alps, you would often have to journey along a narrow road, with lofty cliffs towering up on one side of you, and awful precipices on the other. The mountains are too steep and high for you to see their top; the precipices too overhanging for you to see down to the bottom: even to look over makes you feel giddy. One step over the edge would be death. But this matters not as long as you can see the right path and keep in it. Clouds may clothe the mountains; mists may hide the valleys: it matters not if you have sunlight on your path. Just so, there are questions we should like to have answered, about which the Bible is silent; mysteries too high and too deep for us, on which it sheds no light. It shines on the way of duty and on the way of salvation, and upon *every step* of the way.—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 149.

#### NEXT YEAR

'Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors.'—PROVERBS viii. 34.

I wish you a Happy New Year!—when it comes—and now let me show you how to make sure it will be happy. 'Blessed is the man'—(that means, *happy is the one*)—'who does three things—hearing, watching, waiting on the Lord'—and you can do them all to-day, and every day of the year.

**Hearing**—that's first—listening for Jesus. You do pray, do you not?—every morning and night. That is good, that is speaking to Jesus. But what about the answer?—about listening for what Jesus wants to say to you? Do you ever do that? There is a curious thing called the *telephone*. It is a peculiar wire, miles long sometimes, and what is spoken at one end of it is heard at the other—just as prayer lets us speak with Jesus, though He seems far away. But what if a man were to ask a question through the telephone, and then go off without waiting for the reply? Why, it would be all one as though he hadn't asked the question at all. He should have waited and listened. And that is what



we must do after we have spoken to Jesus! We must learn to wait for what Jesus would say to us. Try then, sometimes, to be very quiet by yourself and think, 'What would Jesus like me to do?'—and He will speak to you: He will put a right thought into your heart. And when you read the Bible or hear it read, remember to ask, 'What would Jesus have me learn?'—and He will show you. Learn this, the first thing—to listen for Jesus.

Watching—that is next. You like dogs, I am sure. I do—they are so faithful, and wise, and forgiving. Haven't you noticed, then, why the dog pleases his master so much? It is because he is always watching to see what his master wants. Every minute—at every turn of the road—you see doggie looking to his master to mark if there is anything he can do for him. That is watching in love, and it is what we have to learn for Jesus. If we try to please Him, we can't fail to please everybody else that is good. We can do it in many ways. Think in the morning, 'What can I do today to please Jesus?'—then watch, and you will soon find a way to make Him glad. But it is only as you watch you will find a way: those who are not seeking never find. Do you watch; keep Him always in mind, and you will find hundreds of ways of giving Him pleasure.

Waiting—that's the third thing, and it is a great thing, though it seems so little. It means patience. There are a great many things you want to do, and want to know, and want to get, and sometimes you are very impatient about them. Learn to wait the Lord's leisure: things have to grow like the corn from the spring to the autumn, and it would do you no good to have them before they are ripe. Learn to wait: there is no good thing the Lord will keep back from you when it is ready for you, and you are ready for it. Be patient—and wait on the Lord.

Every day through the year try to practise these three things—hearing what Jesus wants to say; watching for what He would like you to do, and waiting for what He will give you in His own good time. Try to do these, and I promise you shall have a Happy New Year—for Jesus says it: 'Happy is the man and happy is the child who listens, watches, and waits for Me.'—J. REID HOWAT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 251.

### THE BIBLE WARNING AGAINST LYING

'Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord.'—PROVERBS XII 22.

I. WE ought to mind this warning against lying—in the First Place because of 'What God Thinks About it'.—There is hardly any form of wickedness against which God has spoken so often and so strongly in the Bible as He has against lying. He says in one place, 'The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped'. In another place he says, 'A lying tongue is but for a moment'; and in yet another, 'He that speaketh lies shall perish'.

There is no greater honour to be found anywhere than they will have who are permitted to enter heaven, and see God's face, and live with Him. But how terrible it is to hear God say, 'He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight'. In another place God says, 'I hate and abhor lying'. But in our text we have one of the strongest passages which the Bible gives us to show what God thinks about lying. Here we are told that, 'Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord'. Who would want to be considered as an abomination by that great, and good, and holy Being, who sits upon the throne of heaven; and whom all the angels of heaven love, and honour, and praise, and worship? This ought to lead each of us to take our stand here, and say: 'Well, whatever else I may do, by the help of God I am resolved that I will never tell a lie, because that will make me an abomination unto the Lord'.

To know what God thinks about lying should lead us to mind the warning against it.

This story is told of a little boy named Willie. He was only about six years old, and was a dear good boy, very much beloved by his family, and all who knew him. Willie's father had a violin, which he often used to play for the amusement of his children in the evening.

On one occasion a neighbour of theirs, whose name was Taylor, borrowed this violin, and kept it for a long time. At breakfast time one morning Willie heard his father say that he wished Mr. Taylor would send his violin back.

When Willie and his brother John, a little older than himself, were coming home from school that afternoon, he said, 'Johnnie, let us go round by Mr. Taylor's and get papa's violin'. So they went. When they came near the house they met Mr. Taylor. Willie went up to him and said, 'Mr. Taylor, papa sent me to get his violin'. 'All right,' said Mr. Taylor, 'I'll send it round this evening.'

Now notice, if Willie had simply told Mr. Taylor that his father wanted to have the violin back again, it would have been all right. But his father had not sent him to get it; and when Willie said he had, he did not tell the truth. 'After we left Mr. Taylor's,' said his brother Johnnie, in speaking of it afterwards, 'I noticed that Willie was very silent, and seemed troubled about something. I could not tell what was the matter. At last he started and ran towards home. When I got there I found him with his face buried in mother's lap sobbing and crying as if his heart would break. Mother asked me what was the matter. I was telling her that we had been to Mr. Taylor's about father's violin, when Willie looked up and said, as the tears rolled down his cheeks, 'I told a lie—I told a lie!' and then he went on sobbing as before. Pretty soon he went over to a corner of the room and knelt down. With his hands clasped, and the tears streaming down his cheeks, he confessed his sin unto God, and prayed earnestly to be forgiven. And what was it which made that dear boy feel so badly on account of the untruth which he had spoken?

It was just the thought that his lying would make him an abomination unto the Lord. He felt that he never could have a moment's peace till he was sure of God's forgiveness. About a year after this the dear boy was taken sick, and died a very happy death. *That* was Willie's first and only lie. If he had lived to be a hundred years old he never would have told another lie. He would always have remembered what God thinks about lying. And this would have led him to mind the warning against this sin.

**II. And then, the Second Reason why we ought to Mind the Bible Warning against Lying is, because of 'What Men Think of it'.**—Between three and four hundred years before Christ there was a famous philosopher in Greece whose name was Aristotle. He was the teacher of that celebrated General—Alexander the Great. Aristotle was a very wise man. Somebody asked him, one day, what a man could gain by lying. The reply of the philosopher was: 'His gain will be this, that no one will believe him when he speaks the truth'.

We are told that there was a distinguished poet in Italy whose name was Petrarch. This man had gained for himself a well-known character for speaking the truth. On one occasion he had to appear in court as a witness in a certain trial. In such cases it is customary, before a witness is allowed to speak, for one of the officers of the court to get him to take a solemn oath, in which he pledges himself to speak—'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. But when the officer was about to get Petrarch to take this oath, the judge rose in his place and said—'Never mind, sir. It is not necessary for Petrarch to take that oath; for every one knows that he never speaks anything but what is true.'

*That* was an honourable character for anyone to have. And these incidents show us clearly what men think about lying, and how highly those persons are esteemed who gain for themselves the reputation of always speaking the truth.

In the country of Siam, in Asia, we are told that a person who tells a lie is punished according to law by having his mouth sewed up. If this law prevailed in our country, and was faithfully carried out, in going through the crowded streets how many people we should see with their mouths sewed up!

A little girl came to her mother before breakfast one morning, saying, 'Mamma, tell me what you think; which is the worst, lying or stealing?' 'Indeed, I hardly know, my dear. They are both very bad. I hope you won't have anything to do with either of them.'

'Well,' said the little girl, 'I've been thinking a great deal about it, and I've come to the conclusion that it's worse to lie than to steal. For you see, if you steal anything, when you are sorry for what you have done you can take it back, unless it's something you have eaten, and even then you can go and pay for it; but'—and then there was a look of awe in

the little girl's face—as she said, 'if it's a lie—it is there for ever!'

The last illustration of this part of our subject may be called, 'what an English nobleman thought of lying'.

The person here referred to was the famous Algernon Sidney. He lived in the troublesome times of King Charles I. It was common then for men to be imprisoned and even put to death, simply because they held different opinions on some political matters from those which were held by the heads of the government.

Sidney had written a political paper and signed his name to it. The king was greatly offended by this paper. He ordered him to be arrested and put in prison. He was afterwards tried and condemned to death for what he had written. That paper was brought to him in prison. His attention was called to the signature attached to the article, and he was told that if he was willing to say that he had not signed that paper, his life would be spared, and he would be released from prison. Now here you see the great question which Algernon Sidney had to settle was this—'Shall I tell a lie and save my life, or shall I tell the truth and lose it?' His answer was—'I did sign that paper. I could save my life by telling a lie, but I would rather a thousand times tell the truth, even though my life must be the cost.' That was noble, and so the second reason why we should mind the Bible warning against lying is, because of what men think of it.

**III. The Third Reason why we should Mind this Warning is, because of 'the Punishment which must follow Lying after Death'.**—Whatever the effect of our lying may be in this life it will soon be over. But the consequences of lying, which must follow us after death, will last for ever.

Now let us look at one or two illustrations which show us how the thought of the punishment, which must follow lying after death, will help to keep us from committing this sin.

Our first incident is very short, but just to the point. We may call it, 'afraid of lying'.

One day a little boy had been sent on an errand by his uncle. He had stopped several times on his way to watch the boys playing marbles and to look at the store windows; but at last he remembered how long he had been gone, and then he started to run back to his uncle's workshop as fast as he could go.

When he got near the shop he met one of the workmen, who said to him:—

'Why are you running yourself out of breath in that way, Charley? Just tell your uncle that the people kept you waiting.'

'But the people didn't do it,' said Charley, 'and that would be a lie.'

'To be sure it would, but what difference would that make?'

'I a liar? I tell a lie!' said Charley, indignantly. 'No, not if it was to escape a whipping every day. My mother always told me that lying was the first

step to ruin. I want, above all things, to go to heaven when I die, but my Bible tells me that no liar can enter heaven.'

I have one other story to illustrate this part of our subject; we may call it, 'kept from lying by fear of the future.'

This story was told by an English merchant who had been very successful in his business. In talking to a friend one day he said, 'When I was fifteen years old I was in the service of Mr. C., a farmer in Yorkshire. One day Mr. C. was expecting a gentleman from a distance to buy one of his horses. That animal had certain defects, which, if the gentleman intending to purchase it knew about, he would not be willing to take it. Mr. C. said to me, "Now, Bob, if this gentleman should ask you whether the horse has any defects, you must be sure and say, No, sir. Do you hear?" "Yes, sir, I hear, but I can't do that. I know the horse *has* defects, and I can't tell a lie about it. I never told a lie in my life, and I am not willing to begin now." This made Mr. C. very angry.

"Well," said he, "if you don't do as I tell you, I'll give you such a horsewhipping as you'll never forget while you live."

'My answer to him was, "Sir, I can stand the horsewhipping; but the Bible tells me that 'all liars must have their part in the lake of fire,' and *that* is something that I cannot stand. So my mind is made up never to tell a lie."

'Just after this the gentleman on horseback made his appearance, and began bargaining for the horse for which he offered quite a large sum. He asked a number of questions about certain defects which horses sometimes have, and he wanted to know if this horse had any of those defects. Mr. C. assured him positively that he hadn't one of them. And then to confirm what he had said he called on me and began to ask me, in the presence of the gentleman, if the horse was not perfectly sound? In answer to this I said at once—"No, it isn't". "What!" exclaimed the gentleman, "isn't it sound?" "No, sir, it isn't, and Mr. C. knows that as well as I do." Then the gentleman was much offended and gave the farmer a severe rebuke, and declared that he would neither buy that horse of him, nor any other, as long as he lived.

'No sooner had he departed than Mr. C. followed me to the stable where I had gone. He shut the door, and taking a large horsewhip he laid it on me most unmercifully till my back and shoulders were black and blue. "And now," said he, "you'll know better than to disobey me another time."

'When he was going out of the stable, as I was smarting from the cruel lashes of that whip, I called out after him—"Satan is preparing a warm place for you in that lake of fire".

And now, see what took place immediately after this. The farmer went towards a large water trough in the barn-yard, where the horses used to go to drink. As he was standing there a frisky young horse came by. Raising himself on his front feet he jerked out

his hind feet with great violence, and struck Mr. C. a heavy blow on the head. He fell to the ground insensible. He never rallied from that blow, and died before the next morning. Who would want to be in that man's place, and to bear the punishment for lying that would follow him after death? The thought of that punishment is a very strong reason why we should mind the Bible warning against lying.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings, Addresses to Children*, p. 114.

### THE WARNING AGAINST THE TRANSGRESSOR'S WAY

'The way of transgressors is hard.'—PROVERBS XIII. 15.

**I. The First Thing that Helps to make the Way of the Transgressor Hard, is the 'Loss of a good Conscience' which Follows from it.**—What is conscience? Conscience is something which God has put in our hearts or minds to encourage us to do what is right, and to warn us against doing what is wrong. It has a voice which we may well think of as the voice of God that speaks to our souls. And our happiness or misery depends very much on the way in which this voice of conscience speaks to us. When we do what is right conscience speaks pleasantly to us, and that makes us feel comfortable and happy. But when we do what is wrong conscience finds fault with us and reproves us, and we cannot help feeling unhappy when this is the case.

And so one of the things which helps to make the way of transgressors hard is the voice of conscience, when it is made uneasy on account of the wrong things that we have done. This was what Solomon meant when he said, 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity—but a wounded spirit'—or the voice of an uneasy, or guilty conscience—'*who can bear?*'

We have a good illustration of this part of our subject in the case of Judas Iscariot. Shortly after he had betrayed his master, Our Blessed Saviour, he went and hanged himself. Now why did he do this? He had nothing to fear in the way of punishment from the Jewish rulers. Nobody would have hurt him for what he had done. Then why did he go and hang himself? It was because of the trouble which his conscience gave him for what he had done. If you and I had been near Judas then, and could have listened to the voice of his conscience, we should have heard it saying to him something like this: 'You are a vile and miserable wretch! You have done the basest and the wickedest thing that ever a man did. You are not fit to live. Every one who sees you will despise you and point the finger of scorn at you!'

This was more than Judas could stand. Who *could* stand this? We do not wonder that under these circumstances Judas did go and hang himself. And as we think of his dead body hanging on the tree what a striking illustration we have here that 'The way of transgressors is hard'.

I have one other illustration here. We may call it, 'a sailor's sad experience'.



This sailor was the captain of a large merchant ship. In one of his voyages he came in sight of a vessel that had been wrecked in mid-ocean, and was in a sinking condition. He saw the signals of distress and heard the shrieks of the men and women crowding the decks; but he kept on his course and would not stop. The officers and crew implored him to stop, and offered, at the risk of their own lives, to try and save the poor creatures from the sinking ship. But the captain would not listen to them. This was very unlike what true sailors are. They are generally unselfish, and ready, at any risk, to help those who are in trouble. And what led that captain to act in this selfish and cruel way? Let me tell you. It was the love of money. His vessel was loaded with a very costly cargo. At the port for which he was sailing the goods he had on board were in great demand, and brought a very high price. Another vessel had sailed the same day from the port he had left, laden with the same kind of cargo, and going to the same port. The captain felt sure that if he reached port before the other vessel, he would certainly make enormous profits.

So he sailed on his course and left the crew and passengers, clinging to that wrecked vessel, to go down in the deep waters, unhelped. Before the end of the voyage he got each person on board the ship to promise never to tell about the loss of that wrecked vessel, and he rewarded them for doing so. Then he reached port several days before the other vessel. He became very rich from the sale of his cargo; but he lived and died a miserable man. He never could forget that sinking wreck and the poor creatures who went down with it. The thought of it tortured him by day and occupied his dreams by night. He had a splendid house by the seaside, but when the storms swept by he fancied he could hear, in the wail of the winds, the wild shrieks of the men and women whom he might have saved, but did not. Sometimes he would start from his sleep, giving out the command, 'Lower the boat,' only to find the cold sweat of agony on his brow and to feel his tortured conscience gnawing like a serpent at his heart. He found that 'The way of transgressors is hard'. And the first thing that makes it so is the loss of a good conscience.

**II. The Second Thing that makes the Way of the Transgressor Hard is 'the Loss of Character' which Follows from it.**—We see how this was in the case of Adam and Eve. When God created them they were pure and holy beings. Their characters were perfect. God placed them in that beautiful garden of Eden which He had prepared for them. There they had everything they could desire to make them happy. God was their Father and Friend, and the angels were their companions. They could walk about that lovely garden, and eat of the fruit of all the trees that grew there, except *one*. That was called—'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. God had told them that they must not eat of the fruit of that tree. *This* was the only commandment

which God gave them. Now surely they might have been willing to obey this one command, and let that tree alone. If they had only done this they never would have lost the good character which they then had, and they might have lived in paradise all their days. But Satan found his way into that garden. He tempted them to break that command. They ate of the fruit of the tree, which God had said they must not eat. Then they lost their character as good and holy beings, and were driven out of that lovely garden never to enter it again. And as they went out, poor miserable sinners, though they had never heard these words of Solomon, they must have felt that 'The way of transgressors is hard'.

A letter carrier in one of our large cities found, on reaching the post office after going round his beat, a letter at the bottom of his bag which he had failed to deliver. He ought to have gone right back at once and delivered that letter. But he was tired and hungry. He thought it was only an ordinary letter of no particular importance, so he thrust it into his pocket to be delivered the next day. Thus he failed of doing his duty. *This* was his transgression.

And what was the result of this neglected act of duty? For want of that letter a great firm failed to meet their engagements; their notes were protested, a large mill was closed, and hundreds of poor workmen were thrown out of employment.

And what was the effect on the letter carrier himself? He lost his character. He was discharged from his office, and his family suffered all through that winter for want of the necessities of life. Surely *he* found 'the way of transgressors was hard'!

**III. The Third Thing which makes the Way of the Transgressors Hard is 'the Loss of Usefulness' resulting from it.**

It is a very hard thing to have our ability for usefulness taken away from us. Here is a good illustration of what I mean. Suppose we have before us a mariner's compass. It is a round box about six inches wide with a glass cover over it. If we look into this box we see at the bottom a sheet of white paper that fits closely into it. On the surface of this paper we see a circular ring printed, with east and west and north and south, and all the points of the compass marked on it. In the middle of the box is a smooth piece of steel in the shape of a flat needle. It is fixed on the point of an upright piece of iron, so that it can easily turn round in any direction. God has given to that needle the power of pointing to the north at all times and in all places. This is a wonderful power. We call it magnetism. We do not know what it is. But it is this power which that little needle has of turning to the north which makes the mariner's compass so useful. The sailor takes it with him as he sails over the ocean, and thus he is able to steer his vessel in the right direction, wherever he may be. But if anything could be done which would take away from that little needle the power which it has of turning to the north, then all its usefulness would be gone. It would no longer do the sailor any

good. He would not care to take it with him any more.

And what the magnetism of that little needle, or its power of turning to the north, is to the mariner's compass, the power of making ourselves useful is to us. If people know that we are trying to do right; if they are sure that we are honest and true, *then* there is no telling what good we may do and how useful we may be. But if we do what is wrong, if we allow ourselves to go in the way of transgressors, then we lose our character, and that must take away very much our power of being useful.

Some years ago a man became insane from the accusations of his conscience for having neglected his duty. He had been a watchman on a railroad bridge in Connecticut. When at his post the duty expected of him was to throw up a signal light when the draw in the bridge was open, so that trains coming along might see it in time to stop before reaching the opening in the bridge. One dark night he allowed himself to fall asleep instead of going out and hoisting the signal in time to give warning to any train that might be coming along.

Presently an express train came rushing by. No signal light was seen. That train did not stop, but on it pushed till it plunged into that opening in the bridge. There was an awful wreck. A great number of unfortunate persons were crushed to death, and many more were fearfully wounded.

When the guilty watchman was searched for the next day it was found that the thought of the terrible evil he had done had made him crazy, and all that he could say was, 'Oh! that I had only done my duty!' With a frightful look he muttered these words over and over again. After this the remaining years of his life were spent in an insane asylum; but every day, till the day of his death, he was heard repeating the same sad words, 'Oh! that I had only done my duty!' Surely that poor man found the way of transgressors a hard way.

**IV. But there is a Fourth Thing that makes the Way of Transgressors Hard, and that is 'The Loss of the Soul'.—**It is quite possible for any transgressor to save his soul and get to heaven. The greatest transgressor that ever trod the earth, if he will only repent and believe in Jesus, may find his way to heaven. We know very well that—when Jesus had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers'. But when we go into the way of transgressors we do not know that we shall ever have an opportunity of repenting and believing in Jesus. And *then*, no matter what part of the transgressors' way we may have walked in, we shall find it a hard way, because it will be sure to bring the loss of heaven to us. And if we lose heaven, the only thing that can remain for us will be—*everlasting punishment*. And *that* must be a hard way to walk in, which is likely to lead to such an end as this.

In a seaport town on the west coast of England, some years ago, notice was given of a sermon to be

preached one Sunday evening on the proper observance of the Sabbath. The minister who was to preach on this occasion was very eloquent, and a large congregation met to hear him. After the usual service was over, and the hymn sung, the minister gave out his text, and was about to begin his sermon, when he suddenly paused, leaned his head on his hand, rested his elbow on the pulpit, and remained silent for a few moments. Some of his friends were afraid that he was feeling unwell. But he soon straightened himself up, and looking round on the congregation, he said: 'My friends, before beginning my sermon, I ask your kind indulgence while I relate to you a short anecdote.

'It is now fifteen years since I was last within this place of worship. The minister who preached on that occasion was the beloved and venerable man who was then the pastor of this church. The subject of the discourse that night was the same that has brought us together this evening—the proper observance of the Sabbath. Among those who came to the church that evening were three young men. They were wild, ungodly, drinking men, who were already far gone in the way of transgressors, and who came that night, not only for the purpose of insulting and mocking the venerable pastor, but with stones in their pockets to throw at him as he stood in this pulpit.

'The minister had not gone on very far with his sermon when one of the young men said to his companions, "What's the use of listening to the old fool any longer? Let's throw now." But the second one stopped him, saying, "Let's see first what he is going to make out of the point of the sermon which he has just begun". But the young man's curiosity was soon satisfied, and he said: "Oh, confound him! it's all nonsense, just as I expected. Let's throw now!" But the third one of their company then said: "Boys, I think we had better give up altogether the bad intention which brought us here". On hearing this his companions were greatly offended, and immediately left the church, while he remained till the close of the service. Those two young men went on in the way of transgressors, while their companion made up his mind to stop, and not walk in that way any longer.

'And now, my friends,' continued the minister, with great feeling, 'Let me tell you about the after history of those three young men. Of the two who left the church that night one was hanged several years ago at Tyburn, for the crime of forgery; the other was lately hung for murder. They died with the burden of their sins still upon them, and thus they lost their souls; the third'—and here the speaker's voice failed. He was greatly agitated, and paused awhile to wipe away the big tear-drops from his face—'the third is he who is now about to address you—listen to him.'

Let us all ask God to give us grace to keep out of the transgressor's way.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings, Addresses to Children*, p. 91.

## AT THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

PROVERBS XIV. 12.

I was one day sitting in a railway car which I expected to take me to a little town called Newburgh, and we came to a parting of the ways called the Ladybank Junction. At this point, as I learned afterwards, the train divided, and one portion went on to Dundee—the other, by Newburgh to Perth. I heard the guards cry out quite plainly, 'Change here for Dundee'; but I did not hear 'Change for Newburgh and Perth'. I said to a gentleman beside me, 'Are we right?' 'All right, sir; I'm going your way too.' And the train moved on.

The next station on the *right road* should have been *Collessie*. The station we actually stopped at was called *Springfield*. 'This is not Collessie,' I said to my fellow-passenger, the man who was going my way too. 'Oh, it's all right—Springfield and Collessie—two names for the same place,' said he.

After Collessie we should have come to Newburgh, the little town at which I was due. Instead of that I saw a great spreading town, with towers and church spires rising above the roofs. The man beside me was now fairly roused; and he cried in a very loud voice, 'We're wrong, sir, we're in the wrong train. We should have changed carriages at Ladybank. This is Cupar, on the road to Dundee.'

And here I was—within an hour or two of the time I should have been at Newburgh—a good twelve miles away from it, and no train back for three hours to come!

But while I lounged about the station and sat in the waiting room, I began to think of mistakes on journeys, of wrong roads, of the hardships and losses of taking wrong roads, and of the need which there is of looking well after right roads. I remembered the Bible proverb which says, 'There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death'. I thought of the great journey of life, and of roads on that journey which seem to be right, but are wrong. And it came into my mind, that my thoughts, sad though they were at the time, might, if I could put them into words, be very useful words of warning to children.

The road I went that day, in my journey to Newburgh, seemed to be the right one, but was not. I want to tell you of roads on a far greater journey—the journey of life—which seem to be right roads but are not. And I want to show you, besides, the need of watching—where I that day failed to watch—at the parting of the ways.

I. There is one road which it is very natural for both young and old to travel, which we all like to travel, and to travel often. This is the road to pleasure. And it is a road God means us to travel. For He has placed us in a bright and beautiful world; and He has given us the power of being happy in His world. Youth is just the beginning of our journey on this road. And I do not know any sight more delightful than the sight of young people moving forward on innocent, natural pleasures. But on this

path, as on every other we enter, there are breaks and partings of the way, and great need of watchfulness in consequence, that in our pursuit of happiness we do not go astray.

My first word to you this morning, therefore, will be—'Beware, in life's journey, of the places where pleasure parts from Christian companionship!' What can be sadder than the contrast between the happiness sought after, by the same young heart often, at ten and at twenty! At both ages there is an earnest, eager pursuit of joy. But it is a joy mixed with the smiles and love of innocent companions at the one period, and destitute of them at the other. And the sorrowful thing is that young people pass into the new bad way of seeking happiness, often without knowing that it is bad. It is a way which seems right to them at the time, but the end of it is death.

In a certain northern city once there lived a family of boys. They were as happy as the day was long. They had a happy home. They were happy in a good mother and father. They were happy at school and at play. And the secret was this: their mother had learned to live in the smile of Christ. And she made that smile shine on everything and everybody round about her. Her children began the day with Christ, and ended it with Christ. Their mother managed it so, that there was nothing gloomy in prayer, in family worship, or in going to church. The boys were taught to understand that Christ's eye was resting on them, and following them wherever they went, and that it was a friendly eye—the eye of a brother. In a real sense Christ was a friend and companion to them. Many a time on the Sabbath evening, when they were singing hymns at their mother's knee, the thought passed through their minds that nobody could be happier than they.

By and by the young boys had become young men. But they did not all walk in the path in which their early happiness had been found. They no longer cared to have Christ, or their Christian mother, for their companions. Two of them struck out for themselves on strange new paths, with strange new companions, and strange new joys. They attended low casinos, vile dog-fighting saloons, horse-races, and gambling houses. They knew the way to the wine shops. And they forgot the church, and the hymns they used to sing, and their mother's saintly counsels, and all good ways.

Their happiness now was to follow evildoers and evil ways. It was no use speaking to them. Others went these ways; and why not they? They were not going to be tied to their boyish ways for ever. They would seek happiness in their own way. And they sought it for years in that way, and never found it. And all the sweetness died out of their life; and all the early innocence; and all the reverence for their parents; and all reverence for God. And they became hard, and narrow, and vile, and hateful. The happiness they followed after was Christless. And at last it ceased to be happiness. The end of it was death.



II. There is another road we all like to travel. I shall name it the road beautiful. Old and young of us, we are all fond of beauty, and we desire to be beautiful ourselves. It is not a wrong desire. God has put it deep down in every heart. It is a joy to Him when we grow up beautiful.

And He has laid down a great line of way—the line of loving-heartedness—on which the most heavenly beauty may be reached. But there are side-lines not made by God, where beauty parts from that which makes it beauty.

My second warning, therefore, is—'Beware, in life's journey, of those breaks where Beauty parts from Loving-heartedness'.

Here is the right road, where beauty and the loving heart go together—Christ's road. There is the wrong one, where beauty turns away from love. On the one, love makes heart and face beautiful with Divine beauty. It fills the heart with sweetness, and purity, and humility. And these are the great and best beautifiers. On the other, beauty goes the wrong way, the way where love is not. And the heart is filled with pride, and scorn, and envy, and hate. And at the end of this way the beauty is all dead and gone.

There was, about thirty years ago, a very beautiful child living in the same city I referred to before. Everybody said of her when a child, 'How beautiful she looks!' And she looked very beautiful. At school the other girls were struck with her beauty. She was all over beautiful, and had beautiful hair, beautiful eyes, a beautiful face and figure. Her very feet were beautiful. But although the loving Christ had made this beauty, the beautiful girl would not travel on the same line with Christ's love. She turned aside on a line of her own. She would go where pride, and vanity, and scorn of others were. As she grew into womanhood there grew up in her heart pride in her own beauty. She said to herself, 'I am more beautiful than Jane or Mary or Margaret by my side'. She ceased to love Jane and Mary and Margaret. She did not care to remember that Christ might love them very dearly. She cared neither for Christ nor them. She cared only for herself. It was herself she admired and worshipped. As she looked at herself in the glass, she said, 'I am more beautiful than my sister, more beautiful than ever my mother was'. As she said such things, love for her sister and her mother took flight and left her heart. She could no longer love mother, sisters, or school companions. The poor, vain, empty soul of her loved only herself. Her beauty was her snare, and took her away first from Christ, and then from human love. But then came God's wrath upon her wickedness. She became a fine lady, had a fine house, a coach, many servants, had the same hair, the same eyes, the same face and figure. But somehow the beauty had all departed. She was no longer beautiful. Mary, Jane, and Margaret, and all her sisters had grown up to be very beautiful. There was a quiet harvest-evening-like beauty still resting on the

face of her mother. But nobody thought the proud daughter beautiful. People spoke of her as haughty, unfeeling, and hard, but never more as beautiful. The path she chose to travel on seemed good to herself; but the end of it was death. For want of a loving heart in it, her beauty had died. And as for admiration or love, she had neither the one nor the other from man or woman, from angels or God.

III. My third warning is this—'Beware of the places, in life's journey, where Cleverness parts from Goodness!' A good child may be very clever; but there are clever children who have no goodness at all.

God would have the two in company, cleverness and goodness together, the two always moving along the same path. But the road to cleverness is one on which there are many partings of the way; and many and many a poor young soul turns aside and takes the path of cleverness without goodness.

That was the case with a school companion of mine. His story is so sad in itself, and so painful to tell, that I am almost sorry I require to tell it. He was one of the cleverest boys I ever knew, and he was as obliging as he was clever; and he was very comely. I think I see him still, tall, well made, with long, waving, yellow hair, and the bluest and happiest-looking eyes. Everything he did was cleverly done; everything he said was clever. He was far and away the cleverest boy at school. He took all the first prizes; and every boy in the school thought he deserved to take them. When he went to the university he took the same first place in almost all the classes. In the medical classes, to which he next went, he had the highest marks. And his career in these classes for two or three years was so bright with excellence that both professors and students were proud of him.

But long before the time I am describing, this bright and clever boy had turned aside from goodness; he scoffed at goodness. He went aside—trusting to his mere cleverness—to bad ways, to bad companions. He went to vile places and spent his cleverness on sin. Then he forgot his books, got careless in his classes—still trusting to his cleverness—and was actually turned back at the end. Then he took his cleverness into wild society, and became drunken. Then he got into debt, and took money which was not his own. Then, as many bad people do when they get into trouble, he blamed others for his troubles, and sent a letter to an uncle, in which he threatened to kill his uncle unless money was sent to him. Then he was hunted out and arrested by the police, and shut up in gaol and tried and banished. And oh, me! then, in his far banishment, he became worse and worse, and at last was put to death for his crimes.

He parted from Christ's goodness. It seemed to him at the time that that was a right movement to make. He did not believe in Christ. The badness of his life made it impossible for him to believe in Christ. He was clever; and he knew it, and trusted to it, and entered on a path where cleverness was not the servant of Christ. The way seemed right to him no doubt; but the end of it was death. His very

cleverness died out of him. He himself died, while he was still young, the bitter, shameful death I have named, in Norfolk Island, over the sea.

IV. By and by all the boys I am addressing will be looking out for an opening into a well-frequented road—the road to business and money-making. Now that is not a bad road to travel. God made business and money too. And He has laid down straight lines along which business people may move forward with good hope and cheer. God means us all to be busy, and He helps some business people to become rich. But there is one thing which should never be forgotten. His blessing on that road, as on every other, rests only where Christ is. And where Christ is not, in business, or money-making, or anything else, the thing of God which is most real is His wrath.

My next warning, therefore, is—'Beware when Business and Money-making part from Christ!'

Honesty and fair dealing are ways of Christ. And nobleness and service to mankind are possible to those who travel by these ways. With Christ in it, business moves along just those lines of honesty, fair dealing, nobleness, and service to mankind.

People may be very busy and be honest in all they do. They may also be very busy and have no honesty at all. And there are plenty of people who will tell you that business and honesty cannot go together in this world, and other people who deliberately put honesty aside. It is a way which seems right to them; but the end of it is death.

I knew a young lad who had been a very excellent Sunday school teacher, and was intended for the ministry; but some circumstance connected with his family caused him to enter into business. He was very well fitted in some respects to do business; but in one respect, as it turned out, he was not fitted at all. He looked on business life as a different kind of life from Sabbath school life, or Church life. He said, 'Things must be done in business which would not bear to be spoken of on Sunday'. And when he had once gone a little way in this fatal error, he went greedily and madly further and further, and parted from Christ utterly in his whole business career.

One night he was alone in his office. The office windows looked out upon the sea. The sea breeze came gently up over the sleeping town in which he lived. The town lamps were shining in every street. His young wife was waiting for him, wondering at his lateness, in her new parlour. He had been sitting three hours with the pen in his hand, wishing to do what by and by he did, but without the bad courage to do it. At last, between eleven and twelve, he did it. Sitting all alone there he did what he had been meditating to do. It was a little thing he did. To look at, it was as insignificant as the turning aside of the train to a branch line of the railway. He wrote down on a bank bill a name that was not his own; that was all. It was that which made the sweat come hot and cold on his brow, and hands, a dozen times that night as he sat alone. Did not other people do it? It was done every day, he said; it is only the

discovery which is bad. This would not be discovered for six weeks; and in five weeks he would get back the bill and destroy it. He did not want to rob the man whose name he used: he only wanted to use it for his own ends. He made himself believe that it was a right way to take, to get out of a difficulty. But the end of it was death. By that one little bit of writing he had committed the crime of forgery. It was a criminal who came home late, and pale, and cold that night to the poor young creature to whom he was so recently married. It was a criminal's terror which hung over him for the five weeks which followed. And on the sixth week he was in a criminal's cell for forgery.

The way he took killed his good name and his happiness. And the happiness of his young wife was blasted. And he was sent for ten long years to the hulks, to toil among felons as a slave.

But I must not leave you to suppose that it is only when people do dishonest things that they take wrong roads in business and money-making. There are hundreds of business men who would put their right hand in the fire rather than do a dishonest thing, who are yet on wrong roads in all their money-making.

It was only the other year—many will remember the story—that a well-known member of Parliament suddenly disappeared, and for several days no tidings could be heard of him.

He was a money-maker; and he had made so much that he was thought the richest man but one in London. Money-making was his life, his joy, his hope, his god. He had gone to Parliament, just because that would help him to make more money. And, as it happened, our terrible Crimean War had just begun, and this man watched the turnings and shiftings of the war, and went in to make such a fortune as no other man could match. But some way or other things did not turn out on one occasion as he expected; and instead of making a new fortune, he lost all he had made before! He had not one shilling left. In one hour the riches he had been gathering for a lifetime took wings and flew away.

A godly money-maker would have known that everything was not lost, though his money was. He would have God's help and mercy to go back upon. He would have stayed up his soul on the Rock of Ages, and hidden in its clefts until the storm went past. And he would have said, 'God is better to me than thousands of gold and silver!'

But this man had no Rock of Ages to go back upon, nor any green clefts to hide in. Riches had been his god; and they took wings and flew away.

He felt himself thrust back into utter darkness and want and poverty. So he left the House of Commons one evening and took a bottle of poison, and went out of London, out to a lonely heath, out alone in the darkness of that night, out from all life and all human joy, and drank the poison there, under the stars of God—and died.

His way seemed right to him, no doubt, once. But you see the end of it, since Christ was not in it, was death.

These are very sad stories I have been telling you ; but if they help you to see that there is no happiness, nor beauty, nor cleverness, nor right money-making unless Christ and His life and ways be at the heart of them, the stories will not have been told in vain. —ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 3.

### THE CHILDREN'S CITY OF REFUGE

'In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge.' —PROVERBS XIV. 26.

IN a beautiful verse of one of the Psalms when the writer speaks about 'telling the towers, and marking the bulwarks' of the city, he adds, 'Consider her palaces' (Ps. XLVIII. 13). The walls and bulwarks, the towers and arsenal and armoury, are all for *defence* ; but let us enter now for a little her 'Palace,' the abode of the King.

There are many objects of interest which meet our eye there. Let me select one or two.

I. There is the **Banqueting-hall**. This is the Royal chamber where the King entertains His guests. The provisions with which He there supplies His people are the Promises of the Gospel ; spiritual food — better far than the fabled ambrosial fruits and nectar of the heathen gods. He says of these promises that they are all in Christ, 'yea and Amen' to them that believe (2 Cor. i. 20). 'That is to say, they are every one of them quite true : we may be certain they will not fail us. They are for the young as well as for the old : the weak as well as the strong may partake of the royal dainties.

Perhaps you can repeat to me some words from the Prophet Isaiah, which strikingly describe this Gospel feast : with its special peculiarity that it is to be for *all* ?

Yes, 'In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto *all* people a feast of fat things, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined' (Is. xxv. 6). How hearty and kind is the King's welcome ! His words to every guest seated at His table are, 'Eat, O friends, drink, yea drink *abundantly*, O beloved' (Sol. Song v. 1).

II. Let me conduct you to another room in the Palace. It is the **Royal Library**. You know what a library is ? You have seen your father's again and again. I dare say some of you like, at one time to take out the old big folios ; at another, the more modern books locked up within glass doors.

God's Palace Library is filled with volumes. I cannot venture to speak of them all. There are the venerable volumes of the *Divine Faithfulness*, with their ancient bindings ; volumes which God has been writing for 6000 years. On their title page are the words, 'Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love.'

There are the volumes of the *Divine Justice* ; their

frontispiece represents a figure, with balances, weighing out what is righteous and unerring.

There are the volumes of *Divine Providence*. These are various. Some are bound in white and gold, beautifully illuminated ; others are of sombre hue, with black edges and black lettering. But all are written by the same loving hand ; all bear the same loving motto, 'Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things'.

There is the volume of *Divine Love*, with its bright picturings. Its frontispiece is that of a shepherd who has rescued a lamb from the thorny thicket, and is bearing the wanderer on his shoulders home.

There are large volumes full of gracious sayings for the aged ; and there is a bookcase full of little volumes with special sayings for the young. In these, the words, in gilded letters, are inscribed above : 'They that seek Me early shall find Me'.

III. Finally, ere we quit the Palace, let us follow a spiral staircase which leads up to the **Belfry** ; with a clock-tower rising high above the other buildings ; high above walls, and bulwarks, and arsenal. Its bell is heard far and near.

Hear it ! it is even now sounding. It is morning. The mist is still brooding over the river, the early fires are just lighted ; for you see the first coil of blue smoke rising from the housetops in the clear crisp air. As the bell ceases, the clock strikes. We listen ! and its little tongue of iron counts over the number six. The King's servants all begin forthwith their work. Some are building walls ; some are strengthening defences ; some are employed in the royal gardens ; some are carrying pitchers of water from the fountain ; but all are busy.

It is to you I specially refer when I speak of the clock of time thus striking the hour of six. 'That is about the age, I think, of the youngest of you here. *Six o'clock!* It is time for you to go and enter the King's service ; to begin to love and serve Him, and in your own lowly way to *work* for Him. Take the words which were once upon the lips of the King's Divine Son, and make them your own. Let their sound ring in your ears all your life long : 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work' (John ix. 4).

And I would add, not only *while* it is day, but 'while it is yet *early* day'. Do you remember what Jesus, another time, said to His disciples about 'a place of refuge' ? He spoke to them of a city called *Pella* on the other side of the Jordan, to which they were to flee in the hour of danger, and the advice and command He gave them, He repeats in another, truer, higher sense to you, 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter' (Matt. xxiv. 20). Do not put off repairing to Him till the winter of old age overtake you. That is a bad time, the worst of all times to flee for safety, when the snow is falling, and the icicles are on the rocks, and the storms are sweeping over the mountains. Flee, not even in the summer of life if you can help it ; for the sun is then hot, and the



steep dusty road to the city will not be easy to climb in the burning noontide. But go in *spring*; go in that sweet season of early life, when the air is balmy, and the birds are singing, and the young limbs are strong and nimble for the journey. *Now* is the best time: *now* is the accepted time: *now* may be the *only* time.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 326.

### THE PLACE OF REFUGE

'His children shall have a place of refuge.'—PROVERBS XIV. 26.

I wish you (and God also wishes you) to feel quite safe. Perhaps you say, 'I do feel quite safe.' But some time or other you will not feel quite safe. But God wishes you *always* to feel quite safe, and therefore He says what I have read that '*His children shall have a place of refuge*,' that they may be quite safe.

Do you know what 'refuge' means? What is 'a refuge'?

A few weeks ago I went to Portland. At Portland there is what is called 'a harbour of refuge'—a beautiful place—I should like you all to see it. There runs out into the sea, between one and two miles in length, a strong wall of such very big stones—so strong that a railway goes along it. I think it has been built within the last two or three years, to make a 'harbour of refuge'.

One side, as you go along, it is such smooth water—on the left, as you go out, it is all quite smooth; on the other side it is very rough sometimes; but, however rough the sea may be on the right side, it is always smooth on the left.

In London there are a great many places called 'refuges'. Did you ever hear of them? They are for very poor people. There are many boys and girls—and men and women too—who have no home, no place to go to bed at night. But in the long, long, winter nights, when bitterly cold, they may go, if they like, to these 'refuges'; there is a warm fire, and a roof over their heads, and some bread given them at night, and also in the morning. These places are called 'refuges'.

I should like to tell you about a boy, or rather a young man of eighteen years of age, who went into one of these 'homes' or 'refuges,' where there were hundreds in the house. He became very good by going into the 'refuge'. I will tell you how it began.

The superintendent said to him, 'What is your name?' He quickly replied, 'Thomas Smith.' The superintendent was quite sure that was not true; he was so accustomed to look into people's faces that he generally could detect when truth was spoken. He was sure this was a lie.

So what do you think he said to him? 'My boy, have you a mother?' 'Yes, a long way off.' 'Does your mother know about your being here, and your bad ways?' He said, 'No, I hope not.' 'Do you love your mother! and ever think of her?' He answered: 'When I was a little boy I had a rabbit,

and my mother used to love it; and when I had my rabbit in my arms my mother would come and stroke it and praise it, and say, "Pretty rabbit"; and her soft hand, when stroking it, would come over mine. Oh! I remember her soft hand. I wish her soft hand were on me now?' 'What is your name, my boy?' 'Richard Bevering, sir!'

He thought of his mother's soft hand, and he could not tell a lie again. Oh, children, think of your dear mother! That man afterwards became a pious man; but that is the way it began. There ought to be no mothers present; but if there are, O that you would remember the power of 'a mother's soft hand!'

And now in the Bible let us think of 'refuges'. Can you think of any? I think you will find that God never sent any trouble upon the world till He had first made 'a refuge' where His own children could go.

Now, when the flood came, God did not let a drop of rain fall till the ark was built, and everybody who liked might go in and escape; and all who loved God did go in.

We read when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah there was little 'Zoar,' where Lot went and his daughters; and God did not let any brimstone come down till Lot was safe in 'Zoar'.

And when God destroyed Jerusalem, He did just the same. Do you remember the twenty-fourth of Matthew? Christ told His disciples that all Christians were to 'fly to the mountains' when Jerusalem was besieged.

Titus, the Roman emperor, brought his army around Jerusalem, and the Christians could not escape. How could they flee 'to the mountains'? They could not. When all of a sudden—no one could tell why, and no one has been able to guess why—Titus commanded his troops to go back; and, during that day, the Christians escaped to a place called *Pellu*, in the hills. It was 'a place of refuge'. His people will have 'a place of refuge'. God will take care of them.

And I dare say you remember in the thirty-fifth of Numbers there is an account of the six 'cities of refuge'. It was a very strange thing—those 'cities of refuge'. God appointed that there should be six cities in the land of the Jews, that if anybody killed a person by accident, if he ran to and got within the 'city of refuge,' he should be safe: if not, the nearest relation to the person killed, called 'the avenger of blood,' should kill him.

And God took care to put these 'cities of refuge' so accessible to every part of the land that they might be easier reached. So that if a person was unfortunate enough to kill anybody the law enabled him to flee there, and the roads thereto were very good—kept even better than others; and if the man escaping should come to two roads, and be uncertain which to take, there was a post directing him; and when he arrived at 'the city of refuge,' he was to knock, and he would be admitted, and be quite safe.

Now I am going to think what is *our* 'place of

refuge'. Has God any 'place of refuge' for us? I wonder whether you have thought of the same as I have? I have thought of two very near together—the bosom of Jesus, and the wounds of Jesus.

These are our two 'places of refuge'. We'll think a little about them; and you can never have any trouble in all the world in your body or your soul, by night or by day, outward or inward, but you can find your 'refuge,' your safe hiding-place, if you go to the bosom of Jesus, or to the wounds of Jesus.

I. First, the bosom of Jesus. Who lay upon His bosom? Who lay upon Jesus' bosom? Do you remember? John. And how safe John must have felt when lying there. I don't think, when John was lying there, he would care for all the trouble in the world. How little mattered his troubles, or the laughs of men, if he could lie there!

And I am sure it is your 'place of refuge'; for it is said, 'He shall carry the lambs in His bosom'. And you are 'the lambs'. He says so particularly.

Do you remember when Jesus called the little children to Him? Have you ever thought very accurately about it? How do you think He took the little children up? I think He took them up by one arm: lifted them very close to His bosom; then with the other hand He blessed them; for it says, 'He took them up in His arms, and blessed them'. One hand must have been under them, the other over them. One to support them, the other to bless them.

I should like to tell you a very sweet thing which a little Chinese boy said. It was very simple; he was a very little boy, I think about four or five years old. He had been brought up as a heathen, but had heard of Jesus Christ, and wished to be baptised. His father said, 'Oh no! you are not old enough to be baptised'. He replied, 'Father, I don't think so—because Jesus said that He would "carry little children in His bosom"; and now I am so very little, it would be easier for Jesus to carry me.'

Jesus, of course, can carry anybody; but I think it is a pretty thought—'Now I am so very little, it will be easier for Jesus to carry me!'

II. The other 'place of refuge' is the wounds of Jesus. How many wounds had He? Five. I remember once telling you about a beautiful hymn by Herbert, called 'The Post Bag': a bag in which everything is to go, and that bag is the wounds of Jesus. You can put anything into that bag, and He will take it to heaven. If you have not read that poem, I should advise you to do so; for it is very nice.

Now, how are we to go to our 'refuge'?—you remember what it is—the bosom of Jesus, and the wounds of Jesus. Now what do you think will make us go to Jesus? What have we to flee from?

The first thing I should say is trouble. When we have any trouble—I hope you have not much trouble, but you have some troubles, haven't you? and when you have trouble—be it pain, or when anybody is unkind to you, or you are anxious about anything, or you are disappointed, remember your 'refuge'; and

your 'refuge' where you are to go is to the bosom of Jesus, when you are in trouble.

Supposing a lion were running after you, wouldn't you run up a tree? wouldn't you be glad of a 'refuge' from it? I am going to think how we shall find a safe place when any dreadful things come after us.

We will turn to Isaiah xxxii. 2, we'll read it together: 'And a man (observe that word) shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest'. Which is the worst—'wind' or 'tempest'? 'Tempest' is the worst. Then He 'shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest'—cover you all over; the worse it is, the more He will cover you over: 'As rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

I will tell you about a poor blind girl, of whom I have been reading in that very interesting book called *The Denied Sense*, by Dr. Bull; and Dr. Bull has often been to our children's service. This blind girl learned to read the Bible from embossed letters—i.e. raised letters—she learned to read very nicely with her fingers. But it pleased God to paralyse her—she lost all feeling with her fingers.

Oh, she was very unhappy when this happened! and as she thought she could no more read her Bible, she wondered what she should do. But as she took her Bible to say 'Farewell' to it, she kissed it, and in doing so, she found her lips would do to read it by, as they were not paralysed; and so she learnt to read her Bible with her lips, through kissing it, and all the rest of her life she continued to read it with her lips. So God gave her a 'refuge'.

Whatever trouble you have, take my advice—go and tell Jesus, go to His bosom and whisper it to Him. Remember it through life. Sometimes you are away from your friends—no one to feel with you, no one to tell your secrets to—go and tell Jesus. You remember the disciples did this. It is said, 'They went and told Jesus everything' when any trouble happened to them.

Now I want to mention another thing from which we want a 'refuge,' as well as trouble. I am going to mention four things. What shall we have next? Temptation. We are all tempted. Turn to 1 Corinthians x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it'—i.e. 'a place of refuge'.

You will always find when tempted to do anything wrong, if you run to God, God will either take away the temptation, or give you more strength and grace to overcome it. I don't know which He will do, but I know which is best—not for Him to take away the temptation, but to give grace to bear it. But He will always do one or the other.

I should like to tell you of a Norwegian boy of thirteen years of age. His parents were gone away to America. One day he was going through the

fields to drive some cows home, it being part of his duty; and in doing so he had to cross a river, as he came near which, he met some idle boys who said to him, 'We want you to go and steal some apples in that orchard for us'. He replied, 'I will not do so for anybody'. They said, 'We'll make you'. Again he said, 'I won't do it'. They said, 'If you won't we'll duck you in the river'. 'I will not steal,' he replied.

Then these cruel boys—cowardly fellows—took hold of this one boy to drag him down to the river, and notwithstanding all his cries to spare him, they put him into the river and ducked him. And when they had kept on doing this for some time, they said to him, 'Will you do so now?' 'No!' he said. 'Then we'll conquer you'; and they ducked him in the water again and again. And every time he came up they said, 'Will you steal the apples now?' and he said repeatedly, 'No!' And at last they drowned him!

They did not intend to do it, but they did it. And that boy died a martyr, because he would not do what he knew to be wrong. That is the way God delivered him out of temptation.

Again, we need a 'place of refuge' when we have done anything wicked, and feel very uncomfortable, and have a troubled conscience. I think we all know what that is. When we have done something to grieve God we feel unhappy about it; and what are we to do? Fly to the wounds of Jesus! There is no other place to go to. Whenever you feel getting naughty, go at once to Him.

Now there is one more thing—death. We must all die. It is a happy thing for a Christian to die. It is the happiest thing that ever happened to such a one to die, because there is 'a refuge'. There will be the wounds of Jesus, and the bosom of Jesus, both for us when we die.

I heard of a person dying who thus spoke: 'I am too sick to live, and I am too wicked to die'. Sad words! I hope you and I shall not say so when we are on our death-beds.

Now I will read to you the other side—what a little dying child wrote, I believe, on her death-bed:—

Put your arm around me, mother,  
Draw your chair beside my bed;  
Let me lean upon your bosom,  
This poor, weary, aching head.

Once I thought I could not leave you,  
Once I was afraid to die;  
Now I feel 'tis Jesus calls me—  
To His mansion in the sky!

Why should you be grieving, mother,  
That your child is going home,  
To that land, where sin and sorrow,  
Pain and weakness, no more come?

She had her 'refuge'.

Now, just before I finish, I will tell you about a little boy who had his 'refuge' too. The story is called, 'Willie's To-morrow'.

It was in a very miserably poor room, and it was

night. In the grate there was a poor little fire—*not* little bright flames, but blue flames—almost going out, and one poor rushlight candle upon the table. In this wretched room, far on in the night, a mother was at her hard work, to be ready to take home the next morning, to get some money to buy bread; and near this wretched fire was a poor little boy—'Willie'—on his dying bed.

This poor boy lifted up his little pale face, looking so old, though he was young (poverty made him so) and said, 'I am very hungry, mother!' His mother said to him, 'To-morrow, dear Willie, we'll have some bread'. Little Willie said, 'To-morrow! To-morrow! Didn't I pray to God this morning, "Give me, *this day*, my daily bread?" Has God forgotten me? Why *to-morrow*? Didn't He say, *this day*? and I said, "Give me, *this day*, my daily bread".'

Then little Willie lay very still a little while. Eleven o'clock was striking, and little Willie looked up and said, 'Is it to-morrow?' His mother could not speak, but took little Willie in her arms to soothe him. She had no bread to give. Little Willie soon became very much worse, and his thoughts wandered; he thought of all kinds of strange things, but every now and then he said, 'To-morrow! to-morrow!'

Presently he was silent; and his mother saw a smile on his lips, as if he was recognising or seeing somebody he knew; this she afterwards called 'the bright spirit' in his eyes. She knew that he was dying. He just said to her, 'To-morrow! to-morrow, mother!' and he died.

Just then the cathedral clock struck twelve; and the mother counted it. God *had* given him *that day* his 'daily bread'. Oh what bread! what a feast! He was gone *before to-morrow*, where 'they hunger no more, neither thirst any more'. He had found his 'place of refuge'.

'The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms'. Look! 'the eternal God is thy refuge,' and underneath are the wings to bear thee over every trouble here, and waft thee, like little Willie, into the bliss of heaven. 'The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms.'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

## GOOD AND BAD TEMPER

PROVERBS XV. 18.

### I. The Effects of Good and Bad Temper upon Ourselves.—

1. The ill-tempered man is not comfortable. An angry man can never feel comfortable. Anger in our hearts or minds is like a storm at sea. That storm, while it lasts, disturbs everything. It interferes with everybody's comfort; the passengers are sea-sick, the crew are anxious and over-worked, the officers are restless and worried, everything on board is topsyturvy, and the word comfort is almost a mockery. So it is always and everywhere with the irritable and ill-tempered person.

2. The ill-tempered person is not safe. Old Thomas Adams, the Puritan, compared him to a 'ship sent



into the sea which hath the devil for its pilot'. A more pitiable object than a man exposing and ultimately destroying himself by yielding the sceptre of self-government to a thing he despises, even God cannot see! Some time ago in India two little children were asleep in a bungalow when a tiger came out of a jungle for something to eat. He scented the children and entered into the bungalow. But the first thing the tiger saw was a looking-glass, and in the looking-glass another tiger, as he thought. In two seconds he went for his supposed rival with all his might. He injured himself so much with broken glass while attacking his reflection that he soon died of his wounds.

3. The ill-tempered person is not wise. This is almost a truism, but it is still necessary both to state and to prove it. A man is never at his best when he is in a temper. Whatever the cause he advocates, if he loses his temper while advocating it, it is almost sure to suffer. A sharp-witted boy at Leyden, who used to attend the disputations held at the Academy, was asked if he understood Latin. 'Not much,' he replied, 'but I know who is wrong in the argument.' 'How?' 'By seeing who is angry first.' If you are identified with a cause upon the clear and able advocacy of which a great deal depends, be sure never to entrust it to an angry man, for as certain as he takes it he'll lose it, either by too freely abusing the plaintiff's attorney or by making a mean exhibition of himself otherwise. As Professor Drummond well puts it in that choice book published after his death: 'A quick temper really incapacitates for sound judgment. Decisions are struck out at white heat without time to collect grounds or hear explanations,' and thus persons who in calm moments and when under complete self-control are regarded as wise, able, and powerful, become mere feeble, laughing-stocks, and even ciphers through allowing their tempers to get the upper hand of them. Let us remember that we have been created in the image of God, that the Divine likeness we bear is a sacred trust committed to our charge, and that every time we allow it to be debased and degraded by the folly of ill-temper we insult Him in the most flagrant way it is in our power to do. 'The greatest reflection on Almighty power,' said one daring sceptic, 'is a fool.' If there is anything in that, what must be the terrible responsibility of the person who voluntarily becomes a fool through ill-temper. May God spare us from having to personally solve the problem.

4. Ill-temper incapacitates a person for discharging his duty. This is very easily demonstrated, as only half the man is available when he is a slave of temper. Naturalists tell us that when the lion is irritated he flogs his sides with his tail and shakes his mane. If, therefore, a traveller finds himself unexpectedly in the presence of a lion he may know the animal's intentions and take precautions accordingly. The lion thus, by the manifestations of his anger, deprives himself of a good opportunity of stealing a march upon his enemy. He loses ground

and gives you vantage by the exhibition of his temper. Thus, anger manages everything badly. It always incapacitates those who indulge in it to discharge their duties efficiently, and reduces even the most resourceful to absolute impotence.

**II. The Effect of Good and Bad Temper upon Others.**—As Dr. Horton says, 'An angry man or woman spreads a pervading sense of irritation in the house or in the workshop, and all the other occupants of the place are as if they dwelt in a country subject to earthquakes. Life to them is divided between anxiety to avoid the explosion and a painful effort to repair its devastation.' However peaceful and happy a home may be, if a person with an ungovernable temper becomes an inmate of it, its peace is over, its sense of rest is gone, its music is thoroughly destroyed, and life, even with the resources provided by wealth and fortune, becomes a weary burden. What a number of homes there are in our country to-day thus struck and blasted by the lightnings of angry passions. Think of the sufferings endured by those who are condemned to spend their whole lives in such homes. Think of the innocent little children who are the helpless and constant victims of these degrading and disgusting exhibitions of humanity at its worst.

**III. Ill-Temper in its Effects upon Morality and Religion.**—Take it all in all, it is one of the biggest enemies they have. One great author has even gone so far as to say that 'no form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to unchristianise society than evil temper'. It is very strong language, but not one whit too strong, when all is considered. Now we can easily imagine some one asking: 'Are we, then, who are Christians, never to show indignation? Are we never to resist when we are trampled upon? Are we always to submit and say "Thank you" when an unscrupulous person desires to put his foot upon our neck?' Nothing of the kind. Turning the other cheek to the fist of the aggressor does not mean that you are to turn the one struck first to him the second time. Before you make up your mind to disagree with such a doctrine, think of the Christ's indignation in the face of wrong. Can you hear the ring of scorn in His voice when He called the Pharisees whited sepulchres? Can you see the curl on His lip when He denounced His deceitful countrymen as a generation of vipers? Yea, can you see the flame on His cheek when He whips the howling mob of thieves and desecrators out of His Father's house? No, my brethren, neither by word nor by example does Christianity say that you must not wax indignant in the face of wrong. Not only so, but you are a coward in the estimation of Christ if you remain silent and inactive when shams are flourishing and wrongs are growing apace.

But indignation is not ill-temper. To be indignant in the face of sin is a duty. To denounce in the strongest language the hypocrisies, and the shams, and the meannesses of life, is a call from God which

no Christian can neglect. You must not, therefore, confuse ill-temper and its ill-bred crew of associates with this element. They have nothing in common. One is a child of light; the other is a child of darkness.—H. ELWYN THOMAS, *Pulpit Talks to Young People*, p. 27.

### SELF-VICTORY

‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’—PROVERBS XVI. 32.

I AM only going to preach about the last half of this verse. Now I want to talk to you about conquering ourselves. In one word, we will call it ‘Self-Victory,’ and all the sermon will be about Self-Victory, i.e. conquering yourself.

Do not people often say to us, ‘conquer yourself’? I am not sure that that is quite right. Can anybody conquer himself? I do not think he can. God can conquer him! but if anybody sets down to say, ‘I will conquer myself,’ I do not think that person can do it. Therefore, speaking quite truly, quite strictly, it is not right to say, ‘Conquer yourself’.

There is a very important verse about that (1 Cor. xv. 10), where St. Paul says, ‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me’. Look also at Revelation xn. 11. Do you know, heaven is full of conquerors? Everybody in heaven is a conqueror. Now this verse tells us how they conquered. ‘They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb’—by Christ. Therefore nobody can conquer himself excepting by Christ.

Let us read the text again: ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city’.

‘Better’—what does ‘better’ mean? I think it means three things. ‘Better.’ Why is a person who conquers himself better than a great general who takes a city? For three reasons. I will say a little about them.

First, he is a greater hero; he does a more difficult thing—a nobler deed. Perhaps somebody in this church says, ‘I do not think so’. You have never tried then; because if you ever have tried to conquer yourself in anything, you will find how difficult it is. I have known some children try very hard indeed not to bite their nails—not to suck their thumbs—not to stand in a particular way—not to pout their lips. It is difficult to conquer yourself. I feel for you. I know it is very difficult to conquer yourself; and if anybody treats it as an easy thing I say they know nothing about it.

Shall I tell you why it is so difficult? Because God meant it to be difficult. Now I must ask you to think with me about something. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit they were friends with the devil. But God said, in great mercy, ‘You shall not always be friends. I will put enmity between you.’ And when boys or girls begin to try to conquer themselves, they find the ‘enmity’; they find what a hard thing it is to fight against their sins. I am so glad when anybody begins to find it difficult

to be good, because I know then God has begun to put the ‘enmity’. God is keeping His promise, and has begun a good work in that boy’s or girl’s heart. Before they felt any difficulty they were friends with the devil.

And the reason why it is so difficult to conquer any bad habit is because there are all sorts of powers fighting with that fault against you. The devil is there, the powers of darkness are there, so that you are not only fighting against your wicked heart, but against all sorts of wicked powers. Oh, it is so difficult!

You would think it a difficult thing if a soldier had to charge up a hill guarded by the enemy, if he was the first person to scale the walls of a fortress, these would be brave things to do. To lead a forlorn hope is a great thing, to stand by a breach is a great thing, to plant the Queen’s flag on the top of the enemy’s fortress is a brave thing; but all these are as nothing compared to a man conquering his pride, his indulgences, his lying—anything that is wrong.

I should like to tell you of a very brave man, one of the bravest men I ever heard of. I never read of it till the other day, but you may, perhaps, have heard it before. I must shorten the story, for it is a very long one.

It was in the month of November that a Russian nobleman was returning from a tour in Europe, accompanied by his baroness and their little daughter, Eleanora; their servant was sitting on the low dicky. They drove up to an inn for change of horses; the landlord begged them not to proceed, as it was getting dark; much snow had fallen, and the wolves were very hungry. The baron said he was not afraid, and he must go on. He ordered refreshment, they partook of mulled wine, etc. He gave some to his servant, Erric. They drove on. It became exceedingly dark and cold. Poor little Eleanora began to get frightened; her mother, a Christian, tried to comfort her, telling her ‘God was as much with them there as in their own home’.

They passed a dreary moor, where the snow lay thick. Presently they came to a huge forest (there are plenty of such in Russia); the baroness saw Erric look at something very closely. At that moment they heard a long, low, melancholy howl; and the baron said to his servant in front, ‘What is that?’ He replied, ‘A pack of wolves in the distance, they are coming!’ The baron said, ‘What must we do?’ The servant said, ‘You must do this: you must unload your pistols of bullets, and load them with swan shot, and fire at them if they come’. The baron took down his pistols from the top of his carriage, drew the charge, and loaded them with swan shot. Poor little Eleanora was much frightened. ‘What shall we do?’ she exclaimed. Her mother’s answer to her was, ‘He that delivered David out of the paw of the lion and the bear, He can deliver us, if He choose, from these wolves’.

The baron had no sooner loaded his pistols than the wolves came on their track—quite two hundred

of them, a large pack—all running, as wolves do, with their tongues hanging out, and tails stretched quite straight, and howling fiercely. The first wolf—an old grey wolf—led the pack. He came up and seized upon one of the leaders; as he did so, Eric fired and sent a shot through him, and killed him. Turning round to the baron, he said, 'Lend me a string'. He took the string, and tied the dead wolf to the carriage, saying, 'When they see that, the rest will think there is something wrong'. The wolves kept back afraid of the string; but gradually they saw it was a trick, and got courage again, and came rushing after the carriage.

'There is only one thing to be done,' said the servant to the postilion, 'cut the traces of the off horse: let him loose.' He cut the traces, and the horse galloped into the wood, and all the wolves after him in a minute: there remained not one near the carriage. The baroness thought they were safe. The poor horse presently gave a horrible cry—the most horrible cry in nature, when he does scream, is the cry of a dying horse. The postilion galloped on with the horses remaining, as fast as he could; but the snow was deep, and they could not make much way.

Presently the wolves, having eaten the dead horse, came again furiously after them. 'There is yet one thing to be done,' said Eric, 'give them the other leader.' It was done, the wolves galloping after this as after the other. They were now within two miles of the town to which they were going; the lights of the town were in view, but the snow was deep, and they could not make much way.

The wolves were again close upon them; Eric turned round to his master, and said, 'I have served you and my lady faithfully, I trust, for twenty years; but I have never done you the service I am now about to perform. Take care of my wife and child; I am going to jump off, and keep the wolves at bay with my pistols, as long as I can; and when they overcome, they will devour me, but you will have time to get into the town!' The baron said, 'No, Eric, such a thing must not be'. The man was determined. 'Fire your pistols both at once,' said he; 'while I get down—fire!' The baron fired—Eric jumped off. They drove on as fast as they could. They heard a shot—then they heard another shot—and another, a third—and all was silent!

They reached the inn just as the wolves were coming on them again; but the light blazing at the bar frightened the wolves back. The baron, baroness, and Eleanora were safe. The baron and servants went out to search for Eric, but not an atom of him could be found—only his pistols. They supposed, in firing the last shot, the wolves seized on him and devoured him. They raised a monument on the spot, and this was written on it—'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. There was courage! There was an act of self-devotion! There was a noble deed!

Now I must go on to the next thing. It is not only a braver but a *happier* thing to conquer one's self than

to 'take a city'. I wonder whether you have ever felt the happiness. Do you know what a very happy thing it is to conquer some naughty thing in your heart? for, if you do not, I do not hesitate to say, whatever happiness you have enjoyed in life, you do not know what *real* happiness is. There is happiness in one's conscience, if one succeeds in conquering something that is naughty; and there is no happiness like it in the world.

If you take cities it will not make you happy. When a man took nearly all the cities in the world (Alexander the Great), he sat down crying, because he could not find more worlds to take. But if you try to do good, and gradually conquer your own besetting sin, you will feel within such a peace as no words can describe!

There was a little girl whose name was Betty; her grandmother told her 'those that tried to be good were always on the sunny side of everything'. One day poor little Betty had a bad toothache. She said, 'Grandmother! you said there was a sunny side to everything—I do not think there is a sunny side to this'. Her grandmother said, 'I know it is very bad; but if you never had a bad tooth that gave you pain, you would not know what a pleasant thing it is to have one that does not pain you. Besides, you would not be able to feel for other people. And if you bear it patiently, the pain will not be so great.' Betty confessed that it had 'a sunny side,' for she felt happiness in conquering herself, and bearing it patiently.

Betty, some time afterwards, found her grandmother had lost her spectacles. 'Is there a sunny side to that?' she asked. 'Oh yes, there is; I will tell you what it is. The sunny side is I have a little girl, and she has a pair of black eyes, and will bring them to me. That is the sunny side.'

There is always something happy in everything; and you will find it far happier to conquer yourself than if you were a king and conquered the world.

Now, there is another thing—it is not only braver and happier, but something better still—it pleases God. That must be best. I hope you will always think, whenever you want to know which is the best of all things, to ask yourself, 'Which will please God most?' Now the reason why it pleases God so much for you to conquer your sins, is because you will be growing like Jesus Christ. The more you conquer sin the more you will be growing like Christ. When God sees anybody like Christ He is pleased. We have all done that which is worth living for if we please God. The great end of life is to please God.

So there are three things why it is 'better' to rule your own spirit than to take a city. Because it is more difficult, braver; because it leaves a happier feeling behind; and because it pleases God.

I wonder whether there is anybody in this church who is passionate. Do you think there is? Anybody who has a bad temper, who gets cross at times? To you, then, I want to speak. I know it is very difficult. I can quite feel for you. I know what it



is. All of us, grown-up people, know what it is. We have all great struggles. Do not think it is only you. We have all some sin that is a plague to us. I can feel for you from my heart. I know it is a great work.

I will tell you, you *may* succeed. It is very difficult. Peter the Great found it very difficult. He made a law that 'if anybody ever struck his servant, he should be treated as if he were a madman'. Not long after making this law Peter was walking in his garden, and his gardener did or said something that offended Peter, and he struck his gardener a hard blow. He exclaimed, 'I can conquer cities, but I cannot conquer myself'.

Is there an account of anybody in the Bible very proud, but who became humble? I will tell you of one who conquered himself very quickly. Naaman. He would not wash in Jordan to be cured. 'Why does not the prophet do some great thing? Why does he not treat me with distinction? and not send me to wash in that filthy Jordan, which is not half so good as our own rivers? I, forsooth! a great captain like me, to bathe there.' But when his servant spoke to him so wisely, the great captain took his servant's rebuke, as he ought to do; for it was true what the servant said. So he conquered his pride.

Perhaps there are some who are selfish, always greedy, trying to get the best for themselves, taking the nicest things, taking the best place in the room, wanting to be always first. Oh! how unlike are such to Christ! A dreadful sin is selfishness!

Is there anybody in the Bible who was selfish and cured it? I think Jacob did. When he was young he was selfish, for when Esau came in hungry, he sold him a cup of broth for his birthright. And then how selfish in Jacob to try and deceive his old father, and get the blessing. It was dreadfully selfish, and God sent him for twenty-one years to be a servant to conquer himself, and when he came back he acted generously to his brother, he humbled himself to him; he had learned enough by selfishness. However selfish you may be, you may conquer yourself of that dreadful sin.

Two pieces of advice I will give you. Offer up a little prayer in your heart when you feel your sin rising up, 'Lord, help me'. 'Give me grace to conquer it.'

Secondly, make a great effort, nothing is done without effort.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### CASTLE SURE

'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.'—PROVERBS XVIII. 10.

PROBABLY you have not travelled very far. You have never been up the Rhine, or roamed among the Highlands of Bavaria, or wandered amongst the mountains of Palestine, which are all foreign parts very far abroad—and so are the Scotch Highlands, though they are foreign parts not quite so far abroad.

But you have seen pictures of most of these places,

and there has been always one thing standing high in every picture—it has been a castle or tower perched like an eagle's nest on the top of some lofty crag, and commanding a view of all the country underneath. And this is why they built these towers so high up; that they might be able to see far, and know what was coming, and so prepare to receive a friend or resist an enemy. These towers were very safe places. As you came near to one of them you would find that, just where the crag began to get steep and very difficult to climb, there was a narrow passage that went winding round and round, and up and up, and only one or two people could go abreast. That was made narrow on purpose, for if an enemy was coming up that steep way it was very easy to roll rocks down upon him, or shoot at him from the windows of the tower, and so nobody could get up unless those inside the castle were willing; and on the very top there was a great gate with bars of iron and sharp spikes, and when that gate was closed it was useless to try to get in—the people inside were quite safe from any harm that could come to them from people outside.

And again and again people had to make use of the strong tower in that way; for when the enemy came into the land to slay the people, or when robbers came there to steal the cattle, the people drove their flocks up behind the tower, and went into the tower themselves with all their valuables, and then they were safe while the soldiers marched out and fought the enemy or drove off the robbers. Whenever there was trouble honest people ran into the strong tower and were safe.

And that was why good people came to speak about God's name as a strong tower. Whenever trouble came on them, and they were at their wits' end and did not know what to do, then one good man would say to another, 'Ah, well! the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runneth into it, and is safe'. Then the troubled one would look more hopeful, and a brighter light would come into his eye, and he would lift his head a little higher and say, 'That's true; I will put my trust in the Lord; no one was ever harmed yet who did that! And this is what you and I have to learn to do—to make the name of the Lord our strong tower.'

But how can a *name* ever become a strong tower? Oh! easy enough, easy enough! You harken and learn.

There is a country far away called Bolivia. It is very hot there, and being so hot, the people from time to time catch fevers which they call insurrections; and when these fevers are on them they grow very excited, and fight with one another, for the only way to cool these fevers is by letting out blood! Well, some years ago, when they had these fevers very badly indeed, they seized an English captain, and without trying him at all to find out whether he was a righteous man or a wicked one, they dragged him into the market-place, and bandaged his eyes, and were getting ready to shoot him. But the captain had had time to send a friend off to tell the English Consul—he is

the man who stands for the Queen in foreign parts—and the Consul mounted his horse and rode away like an angry gust of wind to the market-place; and when he got there the men had their rifles up ready to shoot the poor captain, but they never got shooting. No! for the Consul rode between them and the prisoner, and cried out, 'In the Queen's name!' Then they did not dare to shoot, for if they had harmed the captain when he had put his trust in our Queen's name, the Queen would have sent soldiers and sailors out there, and most likely those who shot the captain would have been shot themselves. And so he was saved, and was afterwards found to have been innocent of what they had blamed him for, and came back to this country again a free man—for the name of the Queen had been as a strong tower into which he had run and found safety.

Now it is the same with the name of God. It means God's power, and His faithfulness, and His love—everything by which God can protect and take care of those that put their trust in Him. When the Consul spoke of the Queen's name he meant the Queen's power; her name was short for her armies and her navies, and their strength is very great; and the name of the Lord means the Lord's power, and that is greater still. No one was ever put to shame who trusted in the name of the Lord.

Now, do you think of this when you are tempted. Think of God and the temptation will break up and vanish away, you cannot tell how, like clouds scattered in the wind, and not till they are gone will you find how the Lord has been your Protector.

And think of it when you have got something to do that is right, but is hard to be done. Abraham did that once. God wanted to try him, to see if he really would do what He commanded him or not, so He told him to sacrifice his one son—Abraham felt that a hard commandment, but he put his trust in the name of the Lord. And he found the Lord to be good—as everybody finds Him to be when he trusts Him—for just when he was about to slay his son, the Lord stopped him, and gave him a ram to sacrifice instead. Do you remember the name Abraham gave to God then? It was *Jehovah-Jireh*, which means, 'The Lord will provide'.

And that is the name you must trust to when you are at the right thing, and find it hard to do. Trust in the Lord, take shelter in His name—the faithful, the loving, the fatherly God; and when things seem at their worst you will find they are at their best, for God will open a way of escape for you right through the rock, and He will make a path for you right through the river, and He will turn stones into bread and enemies into friends, for He has promised He will provide. So trust Him, trust Him always; keep always in the shelter of His name, as people take shelter in a strong tower, and you will find that the peace of God that passeth all understanding will keep your heart and mind as a garrison keeps safe all who are in it.—*J. REID HOWART, The Children's Angel*, p. 142.

## THE TONGUE

'Death and life are in the power of the tongue.'—PROVERBS XVIII. 21.

1. *The Tongue is like a Steed* (James III. 3).—You have seen a man sitting on the back of a fiery horse. It had a bit in its mouth and a bridle on its neck; and he had to hold it fast and sit upright, bringing all his strength to bear on it, and pressing its sides with his knees. If he had let it go for a moment, it would have dashed away, and perhaps killed both its rider and itself. Now the tongue is like that steed. And, you know, young horses are generally worst to manage; and so are young tongues. Let me tell you when the tongue is like a steed.

1. *When it speaks too much.*—I dare say some of you speak too much. You let your tongue go on chattering sometimes when it should be silent. You must take special care of this when you are in the company of people older than yourselves. It is very unseemly to talk too much then. I remember hearing a man tell that, when he was about the size of some of you older boys, he had a very dear friend who was twice as old as himself. The younger used to teach the elder Latin and Greek, and was repaid by being told his faults. And very good pay that was. One day his friend told him that it was one of his faults that he talked too much. It was a very hard lesson—far harder than the Greek verbs he was teaching his reprovor. But he never forgot it, and said that, looking back, he counted that among the five or six best turns ever done him in his lifetime. Now, some of you may just need the same lesson. It is well to learn it when young. Do you know what you will be called if you grow up without learning it? You will be called a *bore*. That is what a man who speaks too much, and does not allow others to have their fair share of conversation, is called by his friends. Very few people are able to talk a great deal and at the same time talk well. So it is better to talk a little well, than a great deal badly. Speech is silver, silence is golden; speech is human, silence is divine.

2. *When it is boasting.*—Try not to talk much about yourselves. It is time to pull the horse up whenever this begins. It is very hard for some people not to speak about themselves. And if you feel the tendency to do it, you have a horse that requires the bridle. 'Let another praise thee, and not thou thyself.' There are some who have a clever way of boasting; they make other people speak their praises by throwing out suggestions in certain directions. This is called 'fishing for compliments'. But it is always found out; and it is a very mean thing, whether it is found out or not.

3. *When it is angry.*—It is a good rule never to speak when you are angry. It would be almost better to bite your tongue off than to speak then. But it is hard work to be silent. Anger always wants to speak. Some people have very quick tempers; they are easily betrayed into anger. It is a great misfortune for them. They are very sorry for it

afterwards, and resolve not to do it again. But such persons should make another resolution—never to speak one word while the fit of temper lasts. For it is quite impossible to speak then without doing harm. You may do as much evil in two minutes as you will do good in two years. It is all sin, every word that comes out then. Keep the steed tight when you are angry.

**II. The Tongue is like a Sword** (Ps. LVII. 4).—It is not very long ago since in this country every gentleman wore a sword. The country was then so disturbed, and life so precarious, that it was necessary to do so. If a man was suddenly attacked by a person who desired to rob or murder him, he instantly whipped out his sword from the scabbard, and smote his assailant. But it was a most dangerous custom; for many a time, when men were heated with debate or with wine, their hands grasped, by a sort of instinct, the sword's hilt, and blades gleamed and blood flowed without any just cause. It is far better that this old custom has gone out.

But some people still carry about a sword—not by their side but in their mouth. The sword-tongue is the sarcastic tongue. This is sometimes a very useful weapon, if it is used in self-defence, and for striking the right objects. If you are rudely and unjustly assailed by another's tongue, it is a very good thing, sometimes, to be able to silence him by a witty remark. Or if you see a boy ill-using one who is younger and weaker than himself, you may turn attention away from his victim, and fix it on himself, by a sarcastic word. If you hear a boy speaking wickedly and profanely, it is a very good thing to make a laughing-stock of him by some ludicrous suggestion. But, like the old sword, it is a dangerous weapon. He that has a bitter, jeering tongue will make many enemies; and he that jokes against other people would require to be very free from animosity. There are two cases at least in which this sword should never be drawn:—

1. *Against the weak and helpless.*—It is just against such that it is easiest to say funny and sarcastic things. But it is very mean. Do you know what a man or a boy is called who does so? He is called a *bully*. It is a very bad name. Yes, but it is a very bad thing, and deserves a bad name. I would have you to be generous always to the weak. If you know anyone with a deformity in his person or a defect in his speech, or who is extremely poor, be very kind and gentle to him. If you are tempted to make a cutting remark, close your lips. If a crowd of children is swarming round the poor victim, do something to divert them away. Ah! you do not know how deep the sword cuts, and what exquisite pain even a touch on the sore place produces.

2. *Against sacred things and holy persons.*—It is very easy and very common to make a mock of holy things and persons. It would be better for a man to have his tongue wrenched out than to do that. For instance, many children would make a

mock of a child who prayed or became religious. Take care! your sword may cut the bands that are binding a soul to God. Let me mention one other thing here—making jokes out of the Bible. This is often very amusing, and it is difficult to resist the temptation. But it should be resisted. Do not desecrate that holy Book by putting it to such a use.

**III. The Tongue is like a Serpent** (Ps. CXL. 3).—I do not know which animal you dislike most; but I think I dislike the serpent most. And I will tell you why. It is such a sneak. If a man is attacked by a bear or a lion, he has at least a chance. He can strike, or shoot, or at least run away, and perhaps escape. But the serpent sneaks up through the grass, or rushes unseen and gives its blow in the dark, and then glides off again. Now, the tongue is like the serpent—

1. *When it slanders.*—You know what slander is. It is speaking evil of a person behind his back. The boy who does that is a sneak. It is a mean thing. And it is not much better to repeat slander when you hear it, even if you have not originated it. Many people delight both to hear and to tell bad things about others. But a truly generous mind will not repeat even a true story against another without some good cause. If you delight in hearing evil of others, this is just as bad as speaking it. I have read of a noble knight, 'who spake no slander,—no, nor listened to it'; and I think we should all try to be like him. Three-fourths of the evil reports about people are untrue; and this should keep us from either listening to them or repeating them.

2. *When it flatters.*—This is also poison. Flattery is sweet poison, and slander is bitter poison; but both come from the serpent. Many think it a very clever thing to be able to flatter adroitly, and then turn round and laugh at the fool who has believed their sugared lies. Yes, the flattering tongue and the slandering tongue are often the same. It is the tongue that flatters you to your face with honeyed falsehoods that, behind your back, will assail you with words steeped in gall. 'God will cut off all flattering lips.'

**IV. The Tongue is like Fire** (James III. 6).—You have heard of Greek fire. It used to be employed in war before gunpowder was invented. It was scattered about by instruments not unlike cannons. Whatever it touched it set on fire; and it is said to have burned even under water. Sometimes it set whole towns on fire; for, you know, even a spark can kindle a forest.

Now, the tongue is like fire when it speaks profane or foul words in the hearing of others! because those who hear them speak them again, and so the evil spreads and spreads. Many people throughout the country are getting alarmed just now at the terrible prevalence of this sin. I am very sorry to think that it is impossible for you to go through the streets without hearing such language. But remember it is fire. Keep it far from you. And if ever you are tempted to use such words, remember you are kindling fire which may consume souls. I think if profane swearers reflected on this, they would cease from their sin. I



often wonder when I hear respectable-looking men swearing even in the public streets, though there are children around to hear—ay, and to learn. It would be better for a man to have a millstone tied round about his neck, and to be cast into the sea, than to teach little ones to blaspheme.

I would have you mark the boys and men who indulge in this sin, and set them down as those you will avoid. And I wish every one of you would do more—resolve not only to avoid all such language yourselves, but to put it down wherever you meet it. It would not be difficult, for the swearer is a coward; he quails when a brave man challenges him.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 24.

### MY FRIEND

PROVERBS XVIII. 24.

FEELS for me,  
Redeems me,  
Intecedes for me,  
Enlightens me,  
Never leaves me,  
Died for me.

—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 117.

### BUYING THE TRUTH

'Buy the truth, and sell it not.'—PROVERBS XXIII. 23.

The first question that comes into one's mind when one reads this verse, is that very question which Pilate asked, but of which he never waited to hear the answer, 'What is truth?' But our Lord gives you the answer Himself: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life'.

I. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the Truth; and Solomon tells us here that we are to buy Him. How can that be? We know that in many places we are told how He gives Himself to us: how He gave Himself on the cross, to be the payment for our sins; how He gives Himself on the altar, to be the food that keeps our souls alive, just as the meat that we eat keeps our bodies alive. It is very true, He does give Himself to us, and yet we are to buy Him. It is just what is written in Isaiah: 'Yea, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price'. And it means this: that, though He does thus give us Himself, yet it is not without our doing what we can on our parts, without our obeying what He commands us. When we talk about buying and selling, we mean that what we give is worth what we receive. But what have we, or can we have, that is worth the truth here—that is worth, if I may say so, God Himself? When we speak about buying the Truth, we mean that we must give something for it; and the question is, 'What is that something?' You know the parable of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls. And when he had found one pearl of great price, he gave what for it? He went and sold all that he had, and bought that pearl. So now here is the plain truth. If the Holy Ghost had not said it, I should not venture to say so my-

self. But He has; and therefore I may say it too, what you want is—it is the only thing worth wanting in this world, it is the only thing worth trying for, that our Lord Jesus Christ should belong to you, should belong to you as something that is your own. Only it must be on one condition. You must give Him all you have. Now the utmost we can give to anyone is ourselves, that is, all the power of our souls and of our bodies: not sometimes only; not for some hours in the day only; but always—wherever you are, and whatever you are doing. This is the price you have to pay for that pearl. And see how much it costs. When you are doing your lessons, it means that you should work as diligently as you can for His sake; when you are at play you should be as kind as you can to your playfellows for His sake also. It means that the first thing in the morning you should try to remember you are little Christians, having your Lord and God, Himself once a baby, to please: having a dear angel to help you to please Him; having the devil to fight against, who is your enemy as well as His. It means that when you lie down at night, you should be afraid to go to sleep, if you know that you have one sin in your mind that you have not been sorry for; much more if there is one sin that you mean to be guilty of, if ever you should have the opportunity. It means that, whether you eat or drink, you should do it, as St. Paul says, to the glory of God: that then you should remember who has taken you, like poor little lambs, out of a great wide, wild waste common, and put you in here into a fold, where you are safe from so much danger and sin. It means that when you dress and undress, you should remember that as you then put off and put on your clothes, so some day you will have to put off this body that you now have, and that it depends on how you have been living here, whether you put it on again, far more glorious and beautiful than ever it was; or whether you wake up at the judgment-day to that which Daniel calls shame and everlasting contempt; to that which our Lord speaks of as the resurrection of damnation.

It is no easy thing to anyone to buy the Truth. But then, remember, that the easier God's goodness has made it to you, the more He will expect from you.

II. Well, but this is only half the text. 'Buy the truth, and sell it not.' What does that mean, *selling the truth*? It means giving up that which we know to be right for some pleasure or advantage in this world. It was because they would not sell the Truth that the martyrs of whom you have heard so much laid down their lives. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. Now it is not likely that any of you will ever be tempted thus to sell the Truth. But I will tell you a story that I heard the other day when I was away from you. I was being shown over a very large school; and among

other places I was being taken to see was the great bedroom—dormitory, as they call it—where as many as eighty boys sleep, in beds side by side, like yours. Now it is the custom that before they go to bed they should all kneel down and say their prayers; and it is a rule that there should be silence kept for a certain time in order that they may. But, about twenty years ago, out of all those eighty boys not one ever said any prayers. They were ashamed to seem to have any religion, and so they used to go to bed every night as heathens might have done. But about that time there went to that school a boy, not more than eleven or twelve years old, not strong in his health, and rather backward in his learning. The first night he slept in this room he looked round to see if anyone were going to say their prayers or not; and he found that first one and then another got into bed without any thought of them. Then it came into his head that after all he might just as well say them in bed too; that if one prays with all one's heart it does not matter whether we kneel down or no. But then again he remembered what our Lord says, 'Whosoever therefore shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven'. And so, after a great struggle with himself, he took courage and knelt down. Then there arose such a noise and outcry, such a hooting and howling, as might well have frightened a brave man, much more a poor weak boy. And so it went on night after night; as soon as he knelt down there was the same noise, shoes and slippers, and everything that the others could lay their hands on were thrown at him; and wherever he went he was mocked and reviled. But by degrees, first one and then another of the better sort of boys began to think that there must be something in it; began to take his part and defend him; and at last began to follow his example and kneel down themselves. And so it came to pass by degrees, that the truth in this one boy overcame a whole schoolful of iniquity. He had bought the Truth at home, and he would not sell it when he came to school. He did not live very long; and I saw his monument in the chapel of that school. But this I am very sure of, that of all things that are called glorious now, great victories, great conquests, great overcoming difficulties, this is one of the most truly glorious. And something of this kind anyone of you may have to do by and by. If you go out to service, and the first night you are in your new place find that the fellow-servant with whom you have to sleep has no thought of such a thing as prayers, I wonder if you would be ashamed of yourself kneeling down, whether you were laughed at or not? If you should be, then I hope that God will give you grace to think of what I have said now, and to determine that you will not sell the Truth, because of ridicule.

*Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*—Every temptation is only a persuasion to sell it. The devil says, 'If you will give me up this or that good habit or good resolution, I will give you this or that pleasure. And you remember how St. Paul sets forth Moses, when

he was come to years, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And I can wish nothing better for you all than that; that you should esteem the reproach of Christ—that is, the reproaches which others cast at you for the sake of Christ—greater riches than anything which this world can offer you. *Buy the Truth, and sell it not*; and then, some day, if you persevere, you will be taken to the house of Him who is the perfect Truth, and where there is nothing but truth and beauty.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 1.

### THE HEART DEMANDED

'My son, give Me thine heart.'—PROVERBS XXIII. 26.

I. THE Reason for this demand.—When anyone makes a demand upon you for a thing, especially if it is something valuable, you very naturally ask, 'Why is this demand made? what is the reason of it?' And when the Lord Jesus demands the best you have to give, you are quite entitled to ask a reason for it, and you may be sure He has a good reason to give. If I were to lay my hand upon the best thing you have, the thing which you prize most, and were to say, 'I want this,' I am almost certain you would answer me in one or other of two ways. You would either say *No*, or you would say *Why?* And when Jesus makes His demand for the heart, that is just what many people, both old and young, say to Him. Many say *No* right out, and many ask the reason *why*—'Why should we?' Now, there are three reasons that might be given for complying with Christ's demand:—

1. It is a *right thing* to give the heart to Christ—it is *your duty*. Christ has a *right* to what He asks. If you have *made* a thing, you think you have a right to it. If you have *bought* a thing, you think you have a right to it. In the case of either, you say, 'It is mine by right'. If it were a bicycle, for instance, which you had contrived by your own wisdom, made with your own hands, or bought with your own money, you might indeed give it to another, or lend it to another; but if others took it from you, and were always using it, and you could never get the use of it, even when most you wished it or needed it, would you not have the feeling that a *wrong* had been done to you? You might say, 'I have made it or bought it for myself, and yet it is all one as if I had nothing to do with it'.

I dare say you have seen the picture of a sparrow in a swallow's nest. I have such a picture, neatly drawn by one of our young Sabbath scholars. The swallow, after having spent the cold winter in a warmer country, came with other swallow-friends to spend the summer in this land. It began to build its nest in the corner of a window, taking great pains with it, working late and early to prepare a comfortable home for its little ones, and when it was all complete, I suppose it would be glad its labour was over, and would admire its handiwork and think

(after its own fashion) what a comfortable house it had made ready, first for the eggs, and then for the little birds that would come out of them. But one day when it had gone out to get some food, or to have a little pleasant exercise, darting through the air, or flying round the steeple with some of its friends, a sparrow that had been looking out for a house, saw this one, peeped in, found it all nice and cosy, and said to itself, 'Well, I need not trouble to build a nest for myself when this one is ready made, and is as snug as a nest can be'; so without more ado it took possession, and when the swallow came back it found its house occupied by a stranger who set it at defiance, and like a thief and a robber, stole and kept what belonged to another. Now when the swallow came back and said, 'Give me my house,' if the sparrow had asked the reason why, the answer might have been, 'Because I have a right to it'. You would say at once, 'Surely the swallow should get it, because it is right'. Would you not?

Or let me suppose that instead of a swallow it was yourself who had built a house, that you had papered and painted and furnished it, laying out the little garden round it, planting it with the flowers you like best, and making it, as you would say, a 'darling little house'. But when you come home one day a stranger opens the door, looks at you as if you were an intruder, asks what you want, tells you to begone, shuts the door in your face, turns the key in the lock, draws the bar and fastens the chain, as much as to say, 'You shall never get in here!' What would you think? What would you say? 'Give me my house.' Why? 'Because no one has a right to it but myself.'

And it is just so with the Lord Jesus. He made your heart for Himself. He wants it for Himself. He wants to occupy it, to make it His dwelling-place. He says, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock. Let Me in. Give Me thine heart.' And if you ask a reason, He might say just like yourself, 'Because I have a right to it. I made it, made it for Myself, and it is right that I should have it.'

2. It is a safe thing to give the heart to Christ—it is your interest. It is important to have our 'valuables,' as we call them, in a place of safety. Many people who live in town go to the country for the summer. You see windows covered with brown paper, and the door 'brasses' uncleaned, and the grass growing on the street, telling that the houses are unoccupied. And what if thieves should break into the unoccupied houses? What of the silver-plate and other precious things which are there in winter? They are all out of the reach of danger, in the great 'safes' of the bank. The banker, as it were, says, 'Send them to me, and they will be safe in my keeping'.

When I was in Holland lately notices were hung up in the bedrooms of the hotels, in three languages—Dutch, German, and French—saying that all 'valuables' were to be handed over to the keeping of the owner of the hotel. He, as it were, said to

each of us, 'Commit them to me, and so they will be safe'.

Now, the most precious thing you have is your heart. I do not mean the heart which you feel beating in your breast, though that is so important that your life depends on it. I mean the heart as the seat of the affections—that which trusts and loves and desires and enjoys. The heart is, to each of us, what the mainspring is to the watch; everything depends on it. If the heart is right, all is right; if the heart is wrong, all is wrong. Hence Jesus says of it, 'Out of it are the issues of life'. What an important thing, then, a heart must be!

A party of us left the Victoria Station in London one night, a little while ago, 'booked' our luggage for Amsterdam, and handed it over to the keeping of the railway company. We got on board the steamer at Queenborough, we sailed across the sea to Flushing, travelled to Utrecht, went away in another direction altogether and spent the day, and got into Amsterdam late at night. When we arrived our luggage was nowhere to be seen, but the station-master said, 'You may be sure it is all right, and will be at your hotel before you are up in the morning'. And accordingly, early in the morning, a loud knock awoke me, I jumped up, opened the door, and there was a Dutch porter, with my portmanteau in his hand, all safe. If it had been in my own keeping no saying what might have become of it. It was in better hands, and came all right.

So with your heart. 'Give it to Me,' says Jesus, 'and all the way through, and at the end, you will find it safe.' Many have tried other ways of it, but these have always turned out ill. Sometimes there was a lost heart. Sometimes there was a broken heart. The heart is safe in the keeping of Jesus, and nowhere else.

3. It is a happy thing to give the heart to Christ—it is your blessed privilege. It is strange the notion some people have about the religion of Jesus. You ask a boy or a young man if he would not like to be a Christian, and a cloud comes over his brow at once. You ask a girl if she will not give her heart to Christ, and she looks almost as if you were threatening to do her some harm. When I was walking along the street one day a nun passed by, and I heard a boy say, 'I would not like to live with these gowned people!' And that is just what some people think about deciding for Christ. They say it is like leaving the sunshine to go into a gloomy prison—it is like bidding farewell to all that is bright and joyous, and exchanging it for mourning—it is like giving up the liberty that is life, and becoming a slave.

I say No. The Bible says No. Every one who has tried it says No. There never was a greater mistake. Those who have given their hearts to Christ are of all people the happiest. It must be so. It is a happy thing to do what is right. You cannot do what is right, however hard and trying it may be, without a feeling of gladness filling your heart.



Conscience approves. God approves. All the right-hearted approve. And if it is right to give the heart to Christ, you cannot do so without being happy in the very act. Otherwise, it is like keeping something that belongs to another. It is a burden every time you think of it. What a relief it is to have it out of your hands.

II. The *Manner* of the demand.—Sometimes you have demands made upon you roughly, threateningly; and even where the thing itself is right, the *manner* of the demand turns your heart against it. But it is far otherwise with Jesus. He puts it so gently and kindly that you would think it could hardly fail to win. He says, 'My son'. It is just as if your father or your mother were to come to you to make some request, and putting the hand upon your shoulder were tenderly to say, 'My son—will you?' Who could have the heart to say *No*? Thus it was that the wise king made his request long ago. Thus it is that the Heavenly King sends His message to you now. What shall your answer be?

Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.

—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 19.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST INTEMPERANCE

'At last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.'—  
PROVERBS XXIII. 32.

Our sermon to-day is about the warning against intemperance.

This is the most dangerous of all serpents. And there are three things about the sting of this serpent which should lead us to mind the warning here given.

I. In the First Place, we should Mind this Warning against the Serpent of Intemperance because its Sting is 'A Costly Sting'.—If you are bitten by some other serpent, it may give you pain for a little while, but you can soon get medicine to cure the bite, and that will be the end of it. But it is very different with this serpent of intemperance. Oh, how much the bite of this serpent costs!

One day a gentleman in London was taking his favourite walk near Regent's Park. As he went on his way he saw an old man sitting to rest under the shadow of a tree by the roadside. He knew, from his dress, that he was one of the inmates of the neighbouring almshouse. The gentleman stopped to talk with him, when the following conversation took place between them:—

'What a pity it is, my friend,' said the gentleman, 'that a man of your age should have to spend the rest of your days in the poorhouse. May I ask how old you are?'

'Close on to eighty years, sir.'

'What was your trade?'

'I was a carpenter, sir.'

'Well, that's a good trade to get a living by. Now let me ask you plainly, were you in the habit of taking intoxicating liquors?'

'No, sir; that is, I only took my beer, three

times a day, as the rest of the men did. But I never was a drunkard, if that's what you mean.'

'No, I don't mean that; but I should like to know how much a day your beer cost you?'

'Well, I suppose it was about sixpence a day.'

'And how long, speaking freely, do you suppose you continued to drink it, in that moderate way?'

'Why, I suppose, about sixty years.'

Then the gentleman took out his pencil, while the old man went on talking about his temperate habits and the misfortunes that had overtaken him. When the gentleman had worked out his sum, he said to the old man:—

'My friend, temperate as you say your habits have been, let me tell you that your sixpence a day, for sixty years, at compound interest, has cost you the sum of three thousand two hundred and twenty-six pounds sterling. (That would be sixteen thousand, one hundred and thirty dollars of our money.) And if instead of spending that money for drink, you had laid it aside for your old age, you might now, in place of living in a poorhouse, and being dressed as a pauper, have an income of one hundred and fifty pounds, or seven hundred and fifty dollars a year. That would give you three pounds, or fifteen dollars a week for your support.' Surely that old man found the sting of this serpent a costly sting!

A little boy had attended a temperance meeting one night. When he came home his father said to him, 'Well, my son, have you learned anything to-night?'

'Yes, I have, father.'

'Well, what is it you have learned?'

'Why, I have learned never to put any strong drink to my lips; for they say that intemperance is killing half a million of persons every year, and how do I know but it may kill me? so I have made up my mind to have nothing to do with it.' That is a good lesson for any boy or girl to learn.

II. In the Second Place, we should Mind this Warning against the Serpent of Intemperance because its Sting is 'An Injurious Sting'.—The bite of a serpent is never pleasant. It will often cause pain and inflammation, but these effects can generally be removed. They are not always injurious. But how different it is with the terrible serpent of intemperance! Who can tell all the fearful injury that is done by its sting?

A gentleman was travelling from Boston to Albany in the cars. At one of the stations a fine-looking young man entered the car and sat down by his side. They soon got into conversation together, and talked on a variety of subjects. It seemed that the young man was a theological student and was about to enter the ministry. Something was said about the drinking customs of the day. This caused the young man to say to his companion:—

'Sir, I am only twenty-five years old; and yet you can't tell me anything new about intemperance. I know it, all through, to my sorrow.'

'Please tell me your story,' said the gentleman.

And then he gave the following account of his experience: 'When I was eighteen years of age I went to Boston, to have charge of the books in a large mercantile house. At my boarding-house I became acquainted with four young men, who were clerks like myself. They were in the habit of drinking beer and ale, but nothing stronger then. They invited me to join them in drinking, but I declined. They pressed their invitations very earnestly. I said, "I have never drunk a glass of liquor in my life, and I do not intend to begin now. It would not be just to my temperate parents, nor to my Christian home."

'Now it happened so that one of those young men had a great turn for fun and ridicule. He said things that made the others laugh at me. This was more than I could stand. I finally yielded and drank the first glass of intoxicating liquor that had ever crossed my lips. The habit grew upon me. I soon became a drunkard, and lost my situation. In two years I had an attack of delirium tremens, and found myself standing on the very brink of a drunkard's grave, and of a drunkard's hell. I was greatly alarmed. Then I resolved, by the help of God, to break away from that terrible slavery. I solemnly vowed never again to taste a drop of intoxicating liquor. God helped me in that struggle. I became a sober man and a Christian. And here I am to-day, a brand plucked from the burning, and soon to go forth and preach the glorious gospel of the Son of God.'

**III. But then the Sting of this Serpent is 'A Disgraceful Sting'—and this is the Third Reason why we should Mind this Warning against it.**—We never think of such a thing as disgrace in connection with the bite of any other serpent. It may cause us pain and uneasiness. We may consider ourselves as unfortunate to be so bitten; but the idea of disgrace, or dishonour, in connection with any stings we may happen to have, never enters our minds. But it is very different with the sting of this terrible serpent of intemperance. Those who are bitten by it, are all the time doing things that are foolish and disgraceful.

Let us look at some illustrations of the different ways in which this is done. Our first incident may be called 'playing drunk'.

This story is told of a physician who had been very successful in his profession and had quite a large practice. But he had allowed himself to get into the habit of drinking, and would often go staggering home quite drunk. One day after dinner he was lying on the sofa, and his two little boys were playing in the same room. As he lay there, not asleep, but with his eyes half-closed, he heard his boys talking together in their play.

One of them said to the other, 'Come, let's play drunk, and stagger about as papa does when he comes home'.

Then the elder boy began the play. He went reeling and staggering about the room, rolling his head from shoulder to shoulder, speaking in a thick, rough voice, and imitating his father's drunken ways.

As the father lay there, seeing and hearing all this, his eyes filled with tears, and his heart with grief. 'Is it possible,' he said to himself, 'that I, an educated and intelligent man, and occupying so important a place in society, should allow myself to act in a way so perfectly ridiculous and disgraceful before my family and friends? My boys shall never see me act so foolishly again. From this day forward, as long as I live, by the help of God, I'll never take another drink of intoxicating liquor.' And he was true to his promise. It was a profitable play which those little boys had that afternoon, in showing their father the disgrace of intemperance.

Our next story is one that was told by a prominent Methodist clergyman in England. We may call it, 'Only once drunk'.

'I never shall forget,' says this good minister, 'the end of one with whom I was acquainted, and who was for years a member of my church. He had been a moderate drinker all his days, but had never been known to be intoxicated. On one occasion he had some important business with a merchant from another city, who was accustomed to drink very freely. He invited my friend to spend the evening with him at the hotel, and attend to their business. They were drinking from time to time, all through the evening. For the first time in his life my friend became intoxicated. At the close of the evening he went home drunk, and excited by liquor, not knowing what he did, he struck his wife a severe blow, which caused her death. He was arrested and put in prison. When the trial came on he was found guilty, and the sentence of death was pronounced against him. I visited him in his cell,' says his minister. 'I went with him to the scaffold, offered the last prayer with him, and stood by to see him executed; and there, within sight of the church of which he had been for more than twenty years a member, he was hung like a dog! I never shall forget that scene.' Here we see how disgraceful the sting of this serpent is!—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings, Addresses to Children*, p. 60.

#### APPLES OF GOLD.

'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver.'

—PROVERBS XXV. 11 (R.V.).

'Words,' says the poet, 'fitly spoken,' are like golden fruit in a silver basket. What words could be mean?

1. Words which are fit in themselves—right words.

We may be quite sure that there are many words that are not like this, and have no silver basket.

Slang may be like the crab-apple, but it is not the golden apple. How out of place 'crabs' would be in a silver basket.

2. But the text means also right words said in a right way.

It matters much what we say, and much also how we say it. Kind words may be so roughly spoken that they lose all their kindness, and severe words may be so gently spoken that they do not sting over-much.

When a black boy was asked by the missionary, 'Who are the meek?' his reply was, 'Those who give soft answers to rough questions.'

We so often spoil words by speaking them wrongly. A boy went to apply for a situation.

'Can you write a good hand?' the governor asked.

'Yaas.'

'Good at figures?'

'Yaas.'

'Know the city well?'

'Yaas.'

'That will do. I don't want you,' answered the merchant.

'But,' said a friend when the boy had gone, 'I know the lad to be an honest, industrious boy; why don't you give him a chance?'

'Because he hasn't learned to say "Yes, sir," and "No, sir"'. If he answers me as he did when applying for a situation, how will he answer customers after being here a month?'

So he lost the first situation he applied for because he hadn't learned about the worth of a word 'fity spoken'.

Thus our text, with its beautiful picture of the golden fruit in silver baskets, teaches us the great worth of our words, when good themselves and when well said.

There is a short prayer which we should all pray: 'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.'

Mind your words and God will help you.

'Sir,' said a lad coming down to one of the wharves in Boston, and addressing a well-known merchant, 'Sir, have you any berth on your ship? I want to earn something.'

'What can you do?' asked the gentleman.

'I can try my best to do whatever I am put to do,' answered the boy.

'What have you done?'

'I have sawn and split all mother's wood for nigh on two years.'

'What have you not done?' asked the gentleman, who was a queer sort of questioner.

'Well, sir,' answered the boy, after a moment's pause, 'I have not whispered in school once for a whole year.'

'That's enough,' said the gentleman; 'you may ship aboard this vessel, and I hope to see you the master of her some day. A boy who can master a wood-pile and bridle his tongue must be made of good stuff.'

We could master the wood-pile; let us try also to master our tongue.

Will Carleton says in his *First Settler's Story*:—

Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;

You can't do that way when you're flying words;

Things that we think may sometimes fall back dead;

But God Himself can't kill them when they're said.

'Kind words never die.' And every word fity spoken is like an apple of gold in a basket of silver.—F. B. COWL, *Digging Ditches*, p. 113.

## HINDRANCES

'There is a lion in the way.'—PROVERBS XXVI. 13.

THE man who says this has got two names, but he doesn't like to be called by either of them.

At one time he is called the 'slothful man,' at another time the 'sluggard'. You know what a sloth is? It is a creature as big as a bear, and so lazy! I very much doubt if it ever saw its own tail, it could not turn round quickly enough to look at it! And I think you know what a *slug* is—a lazy little creepy-crawly thing that is always munching, munching—and can't get along for eating. It is always dinner-time with the slug—unless it is bed-time.

And this man is both a sloth and a slug—a lazy fellow. And that is why he sees a lion in the way. There is always a lion in the way of lazy folk. Sometimes there are two or more—a whole menagerie if they are particularly lazy. For, a lion means a difficulty, and whenever you ask a lazy man to do anything difficulties always spring up in his way—like lions—terrible to look at for their glaring eyes, awful to listen to for their fearful roaring.

Don't you be afraid of lions; don't be afraid of them. A good many of them are only stuffed, and their roar is done by machinery. And a good many of them don't exist at all except in your own mind; when you walk boldly up to what you thought was a lion you will often find it is only a skittish lamb!

But of course there are lions in the world; sometimes there are real difficulties in the way. Very well, when these are there, don't you be like the slug or the sloth—don't run away from them, but go straight to them.

For lions, you know, always protect hid treasure. You like to read tales of brave young knights going forth, so fair and free, with sword in hand to deliver young princesses from enchanters' castles, and to fight their way to the caverns where the walls flash with diamonds, and where the old sea-kings had hidden their chests of gold and silver. Ah, these are histories well worth reading. I am very fond of them myself, just because they are all so real and true—one way. Well, now, did ever any of these brave young knights get to the princess or get to the treasure without having first to meet with a lion in the way? No, never once. A lion or a dragon, or something else that was very fearful to behold, was always there keeping guard. But these young knights always make small account of difficulties like these; somehow or other when they go up to them boldly, they always get safely past.

And you can do the same, if you are of the mind for it, and the best way to help you to do this is by always remembering that just behind the lion there is sure to be something well worth having. The lion would not be there if there was not something behind him well worth keeping.

Do you remember how it was with Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*? He was very weary, and very



sad, for he had slept when he should have been awake, and there was darkness round about him and he could not see his way. Then he heard the lions roar—the very lions that had turned back two friends of his of the name of Mistrust and Timorous, who had started to go with Christian. And now the lions were on his own way, and he wondered if he would have to go back too. But just then the darkness lifted a bit, and he saw a stately palace rising before him—the Palace Beautiful. Oh, it was such a lovely sight! he did so wish to enter. But there were two lions before him, right in his way. He would not go back, however; he would go on, and he boldly went up to the lions and passed safely between them. Their roar was like thunder, but their teeth could not reach him, for when he had got quite near them he found that *the lions were chained*, and there was room between them for him to pass, and so he entered the Palace Beautiful.

That's always and always the way. Difficulties are always like lions, to threaten us away if they can from something good or something great that we would like to have, or to learn, or to do. Don't you be afraid of them; go up to them boldly whenever you see them, and you will find that they are either stuffed with machinery to make them roar, or else they are chained and can't do any harm.

That's the way with Satan, the biggest lion of all. He is always going about, going about, but only as far as his chain will let him. He is chained, and as long as you keep on the right road—Christ's road—his chain can't let him reach you. He never deviously anybody yet till they had gone off the right road.

So, whenever you see a lion in the way, whenever any big difficulty roars and threatens you, have you just one question to ask—are you, or are you not, on the right road? If you are, then go boldly on; the lion may frighten but it can't hurt. You will get past safely, and always, always, just beyond the lion, you will find something well worth having; something to make you good, and glad, and strong. Win for yourself a good name; not Sloth, not Slug, not Timorous, not Mistrust, but Christian, and a Christian never turns back from lions in the way. But never will you become a Christian—Christ's very own—till you learn to overcome the hindrances that are sure to be put in the way of your following Jesus.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 154.

### DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN

'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.'—PROVERBS XXX. 17.

NINE miles from the cathedral city of Lichfield is the little town of Uttoxeter; the grey steeple of the church rising among red-tiled roofs and a few scattered trees.

It was in the market-place of Uttoxeter that the great Samuel Johnson once stood for an hour in the pelting rain, to punish himself for an act of disobe-

dience to his father, of which he had been guilty many years before.

The father of Dr. Johnson was a bookseller in Lichfield; and it was his custom, for a long while, to attend Uttoxeter market, and to open a stall there for the sale of a portion of his stock-in-trade. On one occasion, being too sick to leave home, he asked his son Samuel to go and attend to the business for him; but the lad was too proud to do it, and refused. His shame and remorse punished him well for it.

Fifty years afterwards, when the tall grass waved above the grave of the old bookseller, and the disobedient son had become one of the most distinguished men in the literary world, the remembrance of the sin of his boyhood was still fresh in his memory. Being on a visit to some friends in a neighbouring town he hired a carriage, without explaining his purpose to anyone, and told the driver to take him to Uttoxeter. When he reached the market-place, in spite of wind and rain, he got out and stood for an hour, bareheaded, in the open square, much to the astonishment of the villagers to whom he was a stranger, and who thought, very likely, that he was some poor crazy man who did not know what he was about. He *did* know, however, for he was enduring agonies of mind for his ingratitude and disobedience to his father. May none of you have to suffer for a like cause!

In the fifth commandment, as you will remember, the Lord promises a special *blessing* to those who honour their parents, while in the text He threatens the disobedient with a *curse*. 'The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it.'

Here, you will observe, it is not only said that God will punish rude and disrespectful *words* spoken to parents, but even the scornful *look*. Many wretched culprits, in their dying confessions, have testified that their downward course to ruin began with the sin of disobedience to their father and mother; and the bodies of such criminals were usually left unburied, exposed to beasts and birds of prey.

I need not tell you the fearful story of Hophni and Phinehas, sons of old Eli, the priest, weltering in their blood on the battle-field; nor of disobedient Absalom, hanging by his long hair from the bough of a tree, pierced through with Joab's darts, cast into a pit, and covered with a heap of stones.

Even when wicked children escape such signal vengeance, they are often punished by being cursed with thankless sons and daughters of their own.

St. Paul, in his frightful picture of heathenism, places 'disobedience to parents' in the foreground of it; and, again, in one of his later Epistles, he speaks of it as one of the signs that the end of the world is near.

The Jewish law punished this sin with death, and the Hindoos deprive a child of his inheritance who is guilty of it.

Do you ask, *Why is it so wrong to disobey one's parents?*

I answer:—

I. It is a sin to disobey them, **Because we Owe so Much to Them.**—As soon as the cries of the helpless infant are heard, the heart of the mother yearns towards it with the tenderest affection. With what ceaseless and unwearied self-devotion does she study to promote its comfort and welfare! What toil, and weariness, and watchings, and care, and pain, does she endure!

A good man, who treasures up grateful memories of all this, has thus expressed himself in well-chosen words:—

My mother! manhood's anxious brow  
And sterner cares have long been mine;  
Yet turn I to thee fondly now,  
As when upon thy bosom's shrine  
My infant griefs were gently hushed to rest,  
And thy low whispered prayers my slumber blessed.

I referred to the debt of gratitude which is due to a *mother*. And has your *father* done nothing to call forth your love and reverence? How hard and uncomplainingly has he laboured that you might be fed, and clothed, and educated! Gratitude ought to make a child *ashamed* of being disobedient or disrespectful. Never can you show too much care and attention to your father. Joseph, when viceroy of Egypt, took pleasure in leading the plain old shepherd, his father, into the royal court, and introducing him to the king.

One shows real *manliness* in his strict obedience to parental rule. When Antipater wrote to his friend, Alexander the Great, making many complaints against the monarch's mother, he answered with the spirit of a devoted son, 'Knowest thou not that one tear of my mother will blot out a thousand such letters?'

II. Another reason why it is wrong to be disobedient to parents is, **Because God Commands us to Honour and Obey Them.**—They are not even to be regarded by their children as ordinary men and women, but as those to whom the Almighty has given certain rights, which they have no excuse for disregarding. In loving, honouring, and obeying *them*, children are loving, honouring, and obeying *God*. The Lord *commands* children to do this, and He *rewards* them for it.

You have all heard of boys and girls who came to harm because they set at naught God's will in this particular.

The little fellow whose mother had cautioned him against going into the river to bathe more than once a day, and then only for a short time, but who slipped away unnoticed and went in several times, and got the typhoid fever by it—he was one example that you will remember.

That boy with one leg, who hobbles about on a crutch, came to grief for the same sin of disobedience. He had been told not to go near the cannon which the men were firing on the Fourth of July, but he

did not choose to mind, and when the gun exploded it made him a cripple for life.

It is true that *all* disobedient children do not fare as badly, but I believe there are very few of them who escape the stings of conscience and the pangs of remorse, as in the case of Dr. Johnson, of which I have already told you.

A little boy who had a kind, good father came from school one day and found him very sick. His mother was also confined to the bed, and there was nobody but the boy's two sisters to wait upon them.

The father continued to grow worse, and several physicians were called in to consult about his case. They had agreed as to the mode of treatment which should be pursued, and had prescribed the proper remedies. After they had left the house the sick man called his son and said, 'My little boy, I am very ill, and I wish you to take that paper on the stand and run to the apothecary's shop, and get me the medicine written on it!'

The apothecary's shop was about half a mile off, and the little fellow set off briskly on his errand, as he had often done before.

He found the shop shut, the apothecary having gone to his house which was a short distance beyond. Had the little boy done his duty he would have hastened there, and made known his business; but feeling somewhat weary he returned to his sick father without the medicine. As soon as he entered the room he saw that the poor sufferer was in great agony, and the disobedient child felt self-condemned when his father said, 'I hope my little boy has brought me the medicine, for I am in dreadful pain!'

The boy hung his head and muttered out a lie: 'No, sir, the apothecary has got none!'

'Has got none! Is this possible?' asked the sick man. He cast a keen glance on his son, and suspecting that he had told him a falsehood, he said, with a deep sigh, 'My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for the want of that medicine!'

The boy rushed out of the room and cried bitterly, but he was soon called back. He found the whole family standing around the bed, and the dying father about to give his parting counsels.

Speaking to each in turn, he came at last to the little disobedient boy, the youngest of them all. 'The sick man laid his trembling hand upon his head, and gently reminded him that in a few hours he would have no father. 'You must make God your father, my dear boy,' he said, 'and love and obey Him, and always tell the truth.'

The child felt so guilty and so wretched that he could not look his father in the face, but sobbing aloud he rushed from the bedside, and wished, in the agony of remorse, that he could die. How much he would have given, at that moment, if he had not so cruelly disobeyed his dying father! He crept back to the room again and heard the minister praying by the sick-bed. Snatching up his hat, he ran with all speed to the apothecary's and got the medicine,

and, returning with equal haste, he was rushing in with it to give it to his father, when some one caught him by the arm and whispered, '*He is dead!*'

The boy was stupefied and confounded. When he was somewhat recovered he gazed upon the pale, cold face of his dear father, and his soul was pierced with acutest agony as he recalled the words, 'My little boy will see his father suffer great pain for want of that medicine!'

In a day or two after the father's remains were laid in the grave. Some of those who attended the funeral, observing how much distressed the youngest child was, did their best to comfort him. The more kindly, however, that they spoke to him, the more

deeply did he feel his own wickedness in having treated his dying parent with such cruelty.

Twelve years later, when the little boy had grown to be a stout lad of eighteen, and was a student in college, he visited his father's grave. As he read the inscription on the humble tombstone, the pale, reproachful face rose up before his mind's eye, and he thought he would be willing to give worlds, if he had them, to have been able to make his father, then in paradise, hear his piteous lament, while he craved his forgiveness.

Whenever any of you are disposed to be disobedient to your parents, think of this touching story, and take warning by it.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 208.



# ECCLESIASTES

## A THREEFOLD CORD

‘A threefold cord is not quickly broken.’—ECCLESIASTES IV. 12.

SOME people cry at the word ‘broken,’ and there are some things which, when they are broken, it would almost, if it were possible, make an angel cry.

There is a very sad account about some things being broken in the eleventh chapter of Zechariah, but before we look at it I will tell you something about it, and then you will understand it better.

There were the people of Israel and the people of Judah, and they loved God; and when they loved God they loved one another too. And one day the prophet Zechariah took two sticks, and he called one stick ‘Beauty,’ and he called the other stick ‘Bands’; and he said the stick ‘Beauty’ meant that Israel and Judah loved God; and the stick ‘Bands’ meant that Judah loved Israel, and Israel loved Judah; and when the people of Israel and Judah did not love God, then the prophet broke the stick ‘Beauty’; as soon as that was broken, and they did not love God any more, then Israel did not love Judah, and Judah did not love Israel.

Now look at Zechariah xi. 7, ‘And I took unto me two staves (i.e. two sticks): the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands’. Now look at the tenth verse, ‘And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people’. Then look at the fourteenth verse: ‘Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel’.

Do you understand it? The stick ‘Beauty’ showed that Israel and Judah loved God, and the stick ‘Bands’ showed that they loved one another; so when the stick ‘Beauty’ was broken, then ‘Bands’ was also broken. There were three beings: God, Israel, and Judah. When Judah and Israel loved God it was all right; but as soon as stick ‘Beauty’ was broken, ‘Bands’ was broken. But ‘a threefold cord is not quickly broken’.

Now we will see a little more about that. We say, ‘Three times one are three’; but in the Bible three times one are more than three. I mean this. Three together are more than three separate ones. If you were to take three little separate threads and pull them, they would not be nearly so strong as if you were to put them together and make them one. They would be stronger together than separate. ‘A threefold cord’—three things all plaited together—twined into one another—‘is not quickly broken’.

I. I wonder what it means. ‘A threefold cord!’ Do you understand, do you think you quite under-

stand that word ‘Trinity’? Will you think? ‘Trinity’ means that there are three persons who make the one great God. We can all say that; I wonder who understands it? No one, no one in the world understands it. We say it, we believe it; because it is in the Bible. We cannot understand it.

A great many years ago, in the fourth century after Christ, there was a very good and wise man, and he was very much troubled because he could not understand about God—how there could be three persons, and they make one God; and he was very much distressed about it: and they tell this story about him. It is a fable. When his mind was very much distressed because he could not understand about God, he one day went down to the seashore; and by the seaside he saw an angel, and the angel was emptying the sea into a little shell—taking up the sea and pouring it into a shell. ‘What are you doing?’ said the man to the angel. ‘I am emptying the sea into the shell,’ was the reply. The man smiled—‘What! emptying the sea into a shell!’ ‘Oh, yes,’ said the angel, ‘that is easy work compared with what you are trying to do, for you are trying to get the great God into your little mind.’

Therefore we cannot so easily understand about ‘the Trinity,’ as we could put the sea into a little shell; and that would be an impossibility. I wish you to be very attentive for this is very important. Some people say it is very difficult; but I do not think it is. Do try. It is very solemn what I am going to say.

You know there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and those three are the one God. If anybody were to ask you how many Gods there are you must not say three, that would not be right, but one; and in that one God there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

God the Father loved us: He always loved us: He loves us now: I cannot tell you how much God loves us! and He wanted us all to come to Him and be happy, and live with Him for ever. But do you know between us and God there was a great mountain—so that we could not come to God—and that mountain was made up of all sins—our sins!

God the Son said, ‘I am going to take away that mountain’. So He came down from heaven to take that mountain—the mountain of the sins of all the world. Oh, it was such a weight! When it was upon Him it made the blood come out through His pores. It made Him sweat blood. That great mountain was such a load, and He carried it all away that we might all come to God when the mountain was gone.

And did we then come to God? Oh, no; we did not wish to come—we had not in our hearts to come to Him. Then the Holy Ghost said, 'I will go and make them willing'. So the Holy Ghost came, and He put it into our hearts to wish to come to God, and to make us able to come to God, and teach us how to come to God. And then—when the Holy Ghost put it into our hearts to be willing to come, and the mountain was removed—then we were willing to come.

And were we then fit to come to God? No, not at all. So Jesus Christ said, 'I will make them fit'. So He put upon every one of us the robe of His righteousness—beautiful robe! more beautiful than any wedding robe—and made us fit to come to God. Then we could come.

When Jesus had removed the mountain, and the Holy Ghost had made us willing, and Jesus Christ had put on us the robe, then we could come to God and be happy for ever. So God gave us to Christ and He washed us from our sins, and the Holy Ghost made us willing and then gave us back to Christ to be clothed, and Christ gave us back to the Father.

That is 'the Trinity'. That is what God the Father does; what God the Son does; what God the Holy Ghost does. Do you understand that? Do try. It is so beautiful—so comforting. How we are saved—how it is all done—how the Trinity does it—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Now I will tell you another thing about God. Do listen. Sometimes it happens with us that persons do not know what they ought to do; and sometimes persons know what they ought to do, but they cannot do it, they have not the power to do it; and some persons know, but have not the will. Now God has all three. God has infinite knowledge—He knows everything; and infinite power—He can do everything; and infinite love—He wills everything. Now there is 'a threefold cord'—God's wisdom—God's power—God's love; and these hold us on to the throne of God in heaven. If one of these 'cords' were 'broken' no one could be saved. If God were not infinitely wise—strong—loving—nobody could be saved; but God's wisdom, God's power, and God's love make the 'threefold cord'.

Now just look at the tenth of John and the twenty-ninth verse. What fasten you so strongly to God? God's wisdom, God's power, God's love. 'None shall pluck them out of My Father's hand.' Why? because we are tied so fast—God's wisdom, God's power, God's love are the 'threefold cord' that fastens us to the throne of God.

II. And now I will not speak any more about 'the Trinity,' but now I am going to speak to you about other 'threefold cords,' and I think I can tell you about some 'threefold cords' for you. And, first, about one I wish you to have in your bedroom, before you come downstairs in the morning, or go to bed at night. I am going to give you 'a threefold cord' in your bedroom; and then a 'threefold cord' when you come downstairs.

First, 'a threefold cord' in your bedroom. What do you think it is? Can you think about it? Nobody should come downstairs till he has this 'threefold cord'; and it is this: a promise—a prayer—and something to do.

I will tell you how I mean. Now I am preaching and you are listening—let us see if we can find about that (about teaching, being taught) a promise, a prayer, and a duty—making 'a threefold cord' which we must join together, plait together, and make it strong. Now there is the promise—Jesus Christ said in the fourteenth of John that the Holy Spirit should 'teach us all things'. There is a promise—we shall all be taught. Look at Psalm xxv. 4—there is a beautiful prayer, we should all ask God to teach us, 'Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths'. Then look at Psalm xxxiv. 11, 'Come, ye children, hearken unto Me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord'. So there I have the promise that God will teach us all, the prayer to Him to do so, and the duty—hearken, be attentive, listen. We must put the three together. The promise is of no use without the prayer, or the prayer without the duty; but if we string them altogether, very tight—have the prayer, the promise, and the duty—then it will be 'a threefold cord,' which 'cannot be quickly broken'.

There was a little girl, and as she was going along the street, I am sorry to tell you, she met with a very bad accident, for there were some boys flinging stones and one went into her eye and hurt her very dreadfully. She had to be carried home; her father sent for a surgeon who said she must undergo a dreadful operation. She sat on her father's knee, and he asked her if she was ready to submit to the operation. 'Not quite, father,' she replied; 'I should like to wait a minute; I have not prayed to God yet.' This was her prayer, 'O God, forgive the little boy who hurt me, and help me to bear the pain well, and may Jesus be with me'. She then said, 'Father, I am ready now'; and she bore it without a cry, and so patient was she that all the people who stood by said, 'How God can help a little girl to bear pain!' See what the grace of God can do! Now there was a 'threefold cord' which that little girl had—she prayed to God, she rested on the promise, she obeyed a commandment. So she was strong in her 'threefold cord,' and could bear pain without murmuring.

I will tell you about another little girl. There was a gentleman who lived in Austria, who did not love God or the Bible, in fact he did not believe the Scriptures. One day he was walking out, and he saw standing in the front of a little cottage upon the door-step a little girl, and she was reading her Bible, and tears were rolling down her cheeks. The gentleman went up to her, and said very kindly, 'My dear, what is the matter? Are you unhappy? What do you cry for?' She said, 'I am not at all unhappy, sir; I am very happy'. 'But you are crying,' he said. 'Oh, they are not tears of sorrow,' she replied, 'but of joy. I am very happy.' 'What makes you so happy?' 'Oh, I have been reading about Jesus

Christ, and it makes me so happy to read about Him, because He is so kind to me.' The gentleman said, 'But Jesus Christ is dead.' She said, 'Oh, no, sir; He is not dead, He lives up in heaven, and He loves me so much.' And he said, 'If Jesus Christ loves you, why have you such poor clothes, because He could send you money to buy better ones?' She said, 'I care not about money, He makes me happy, and I'm going to Him when I die.' He said, 'I suppose some one has told you that?' 'No, sir; this book tells me—and it's all true, and it makes me so glad.' And he said, 'How do you know it is true?' She said, 'Oh, I know it is true—it's all true; indeed it's all true; and it makes me so glad and happy, it must be true'. That was the little girl's way of reasoning. 'It must be true, because it makes me so happy.'

Do you know the gentleman could not forget it. He went away and thought, 'This Bible makes that little girl so happy. I do not feel it. Perhaps if I go to church I shall feel it too.' And he went to church, and he did begin to feel it, and that gentleman became a very holy minister; and he used to go then, and say to others, just as that little girl said to him, 'I know it's all true in the Bible, because it makes me so happy. God promises it, and God does it—I am sure it's all true.' It was 'the threefold cord,' and it could not be 'broken'—promises, and duties.

Will you never go downstairs (unless you are called), never leave your bedroom in the morning, till you have your 'cord'? and take care you have the three 'cords' of it well plaited together—a promise, a prayer, and something to do: don't begin to do anything without the prayer and the promise, but twine them altogether, and 'a threefold cord' will last you all the day.

III. Now we'll come downstairs and I will give you 'a threefold cord'. I look at you, and I think—what are you made of? You have a body—that we can see; and inside your body you have a soul; and inside your soul I hope and believe you have God's Spirit. Then you are body, soul, and spirit. Now I have my three threads. I am going to make a 'cord'. The Spirit must rule the soul, and the soul must rule the body. I know some boys and girls where the body rules the soul. That is not the way to plait it; but the spirit must rule the soul, and the soul must rule the body. If it is so, then your 'threefold cord' is right. Every one of you have body, soul, and spirit—all tied together—so that the spirit should rule the soul, and the soul rule the body.

Now, having these, I must tell you that there are three things we have to do every day. Just think what they are. The first thing is, we have to take care of our own souls—to wash them: do you know how? To keep them: do you know how? To keep them: do you know how? Wash your souls in the right fountain; dress them in the right garment; keep them in the right way.

Now, recollect these. We have to be happy. There are two heaps in the world—a heap of trouble and a heap of happiness. Never think a day has been well spent unless you have decreased the heap of trouble, and increased the heap of joy. Take some, if even a very little bit, off the heap of trouble, and add it to the heap of joy. We have to do good to others, to be useful; and one other thing we have to do is to glorify God; to honour God. A very little child can honour God. A baby can honour God. Whenever a person conquers himself, or herself, God is honoured. We have three things to do—to take care of our own souls, to be useful to those about us, and to glorify God, then we have a 'threefold cord' which is 'not quickly broken'.

Now I will tell you about a sailor boy who, I think, did it. A ship called the 'Cornelia' was on her way to the West Indies, and as she crossed the Atlantic she encountered several severe storms. A gentleman on board relates that during one storm he was standing on deck by the mate of the ship; the sea was boiling, the ship tossing dreadfully, when some rigging on the top of the mainmast was misplaced. The mate saw the danger in a moment; he called a boy from the forepart of the ship: the boy stood before him with his cap in his hand. 'Go up to the royals and right that rigging.' The boy looked a moment; he knew the danger; the ship was pitching dreadfully; but he saw the mate meant what he said; and he bolted off, ran forward, pitched down the fore-castle, disappeared a minute, then came out again; mounted the rigging like a squirrel; was about fifteen minutes putting it to rights; when he had done it, down he came, drew himself straight upright, not ashamed to see anybody. The mate patted him on the head, and said nothing.

Presently the gentleman spoke to him. 'My boy, why did you hesitate when the mate told you to go up, and why did you go down the fore-castle?' The boy replied, 'I thought it would be no harm if for one minute I asked God to take care of me; and I just said a prayer'. 'Who told you to do that?' said the gentleman. 'My mother told me it would be no time lost to pray to God.' The gentleman said, 'I thought I saw something in your pocket—what was it?' 'My Bible, sir; I thought I should be safer if I had my Bible in my pocket. I thought if tossed into the sea, I should like my Bible with me. I had no fear while I had my Bible with me; and could pray to God; and therefore I did it, sir.' He had something stronger than the ropes of the rigging—something greater than man's grasp, hadn't he? He had 'a threefold cord'—just what he ought to have: he had the spirit ruling his soul, and his soul ruling his body—true courage! and he had God's word. 'A threefold cord.' He was himself serving God; he was doing good to his fellow-creatures, and honouring God by the way in which he did it.

Now I'm going to tell you another 'threefold cord'. Sometimes boys and girls make great friendships one with another; girls make great friendships, but



their friendships don't last very long: and why? because it was a twofold cord, and not a 'threefold'.

If you were to go to Portsmouth (I know it was so some years ago, I am not sure whether it is so now, I think it is), in the dockyards, where they make the queen's ropes, you would see a little red thread running along the centre of the rope: the rope is made like any other rope, with the exception of a red thread—which marks a royal cable. Always have a little red thread—showing your royalty—that you love the King of kings, the Son of God—Jesus Christ. It is a good colour—red: and it is the red blood of Christ that makes everything good. Therefore take care there is Christ in your 'cords'. Let Christ be the third party. When boys with boys make friendships, let Christ be in the friendships. When people marry, let Christ be in the marriage. If Christ is not there it will split or break, it will not hold; but if Christ be there, 'a threefold cord is not quickly broken'.

Once more, the greatest of all: there is the 'threefold cord' of real life. What is real life? To live for evermore. And how are we to live for evermore? to be happy for evermore?

I will tell you. There was a little boy, eleven years old; he was dying: a minister went to see him; he was looking very pale and weak. He said to him, 'My dear boy, you look very weary'. The little boy said, 'I trust Jesus—I love Jesus—I am going to follow Jesus. Jesus loves me—I love Jesus, I am strong in Jesus.' Harken to that little voice: see that 'threefold cord'—'I trust Jesus—I love Jesus—I am following Jesus'. Therefore he said, 'I am strong'—for he had the 'threefold cord'. This is the 'cord' of eternal life. To trust Jesus—that is life in Jesus; to love Jesus—that is life with Jesus; to follow Jesus, that is life to Jesus: and life in Jesus, and life with Jesus, and life to Jesus is the 'threefold cord' which shall hold on to life for evermore; nothing shall ever rend it. If you have got that 'cord,' you will never die.

Now in this rough life you want a good anchor—you have it—it is the Lord Jesus Christ: but the anchor must have good cable—let it be the 'threefold cord'—'I trust Jesus, I love Jesus, I follow Jesus,' and 'a threefold cord is not quickly broken'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### THE BLUE-BELL (HYACINTH)

'A good name is better than precious ointment.'—ECCLESIASTES VII. 1.

BLUE-BELL, a good name—matches the flower—we like the flower and so we like the name. Why do we like the flower?

**I. Not because of the Name.**—*Blue*, i.e. really the colour made by a *blow*—and *Bell*, much the same as *bellow*, the noise a beast makes when you give him a blow. So the name, by itself, may mean no more than 'Cry out when you're hurt'; very sensible advice, but as commonplace as sensible. The flower makes the name good, not the name the flower. Judas

(Praise) had a good name, but it did not make him a good man. Our Lord's mother was called 'Mary,' she made the name good, though it meant bitterness.

**II. Not the Family History.**—Botanists call our blue-bell 'the hyacinth without writing'. Some people prize their name because it tells of noble ancestry. In this case rather a sad name than a good name. [Tell the story. Apollo and Zephyr both wanted to have Hyacinth, a pretty boy, for their own special friend. Hyacinth liked Apollo best. So one day, when they were all playing at quoits, Zephyr, in a fit of jealousy, blew Apollo's quoit aside so that it hit and killed Hyacinth. Flowers said to have sprung up out of his blood, and on the leaves strange letters which meant woe! woe!] A child's character need not be spoiled though his father's memory is written with sad records!

**III. Not because of its Relations.**—Squills—Garlic, etc., all belong to the same family. Judged by them any of their relations would hardly be admitted into respectable society. Apply to the case of children with disreputable connections—we must not let the misconduct of their friends prejudice us against receiving them.

**IV. Because of its own Character.**—How beautiful it is! How gain such beauty? Instead of displaying its leaves when young it makes a bulb and saves up its strength—so is able to put forth and nourish the flower. If we want a good name, let us work for it when young that we may win it.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 89.

### THOROUGH

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'—ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

THAT means, does it not, that whatever you have got to do you should do it *at once*? You should.

There is a great big word you may have heard—may have heard others use it, but I fancy it is too big for your size. It is the word *pro-cras-ti-na-tion*! Do you know what it means? It means the lazy man's hard-working day. For procrastination means putting off till to-morrow, and to-morrow is always the lazy man's day for hard work. He always intends doing something great to-morrow, and when to-morrow comes he finds he meant the to-morrow after that, and the one after it, and so on; it is always to-morrow. A right man's work-day is always *now*; when a thing should be done, it is there and then he does it. Learn to do the same. Procrastination is like the rainbow—it is always just a little way ahead, but then nobody has ever been able to come up with it; and if you get into the habit of putting off and putting off, you will find that things also get into the habit of going off and going off, so that you will never be able to get right hold of them. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it forthwith.

But doesn't the text also mean this: Whenever you have anything to do, *begin with the part that is nearest you*?

When you have a skein of silk that has got all in

a tangle, and you want to straighten it out, there are two ways you can do it. You can do it by turning the skein over and over, and looking at it in and out till you have got hold of the proper end of the thread; but if you do that you will often lose as much time as would have straightened out most of it. The other way is the best way; begin anywhere, begin with the part that is nearest you. Get that out of the loop next it; you will find it easier to get it out of the next and the next; and so you will go on till by and by the right end will come to your fingers, and come as if it was ashamed for being so long a-coming. Meanwhile half your work is done!

And it is the same with everything. Have you lessons to learn? It does not matter very much with which you begin, so that you do begin. Have you a lot of things to do? Well, they may look tangled a bit, but what is the best way to deal with a tangle? It is by beginning with what is nearest, and the rest will soon get straight. Get a beginning anyhow, and go on *at once*.

To help you to do that, I want you to think of this: that which *you ought to do is very sacred*.

Don't you wonder sometimes why you were born at this time, and not a thousand years ago, or a thousand years to come? And don't you wonder sometimes why you were born in such a place, instead of ten thousand miles away from it? and often wonder too why you should be living here, and going to school here, and making acquaintances here, instead of living away where the sun sets or the wild jungles are? These things are all wonderful, but do they not show that God has got a hand in it all? God wants you to do something now, and where you are, and as you are, or else He would have created you at another time and put you in another place. And how can we know what God wants of us except by what He lays to our hands to do? Whenever there is anything we *ought* to do, we may be sure God's hand is just on the other side of it, and therefore it is very sacred. It may seem very trifling in itself, but if it is what we ought to do, it will be found at last to have been very important.

Take one instance. About the beginning of the year 1885 England was very nearly going to war with Russia. Oh! that would have been a big, big war if it had broken out! It would have been like burning oil upon water, nobody could guess where the flames would spread to; and who do you think helped to rouse up the angry feelings of this country? It was a man and a boy away in the great deserts of Persia. For the telegraph wire that should have carried to us quickly the news which would make us decide for peace or war, was a wire that stretched across these deserts from Meshed to Teheran, and in many places the wire got slack, and camels and sheep and oxen strayed over it and sometimes broke it; and when it was found to be broken a man and a boy were sent off to have it mended. But they were in no hurry; they didn't do what they had to do with all their might; they took their leisure, chatting with

friends and enjoying themselves, and so were two or three days doing what could have been done in a few hours; and all this time angry people in the House of Commons were demanding why we had not got news, and were hinting very unpleasantly about people wilfully keeping back information; yet the delay was owing to the man and the boy who thought there was no need for being in a hurry about mending a mere wire! They knew nothing about the messages the wire was to carry; they knew nothing about the House of Commons. I don't believe they had ever heard of the Lord Mayor even! but yet through their carelessness about doing what was waiting to be done, they were nearly plunging this nation into a great and terrible war! Learn to look on whatever you have to do as something sacred, just because it is what you ought to do, and therefore God's hand is on the other side of it. There is nothing really trifling in the world; one thing is joined to another; whatever ought to be done, do it well and promptly.

And do it *with your might*.

There are some children who never think they are doing anything with their might unless they are doing it with a great deal of fuss and noise and roughness. That is not might, that is weakness; true strength bridle itself and works quietly. One day a ship got aground on the river. A big tug-boat was sent for, and was fastened to the ship, and tugged and tugged, and churned the water with its paddles; but the ship would not move. They then tried another tug-boat, not nearly so large as the first; and round went its paddles, and the rope was strained more and more, and at last the ship was seen to move, and was soon floating down the river after the little tug-boat. Why could the little tug-boat do what the big tug-boat could not? Because the big tug was wasting its steam, letting a great deal escape by the side-holes; but the little tug didn't waste an ounce of steam, it knew how to use it all, and so worked with a *quiet* might. Learn you to do the same; whatever you have to do, do it with your might; and that does not mean noise and clatter, it means quiet, determined earnestness. If you have to play, play heartily; if you have to work, work with your heart in what you have to do.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Churchette*, p. 187.

### FLIES

'Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to smell badly; so doth a little mischief mar a whole life.'—ECCLESIASTES X. 1.

This is the fly season; wherever you are you have some fly or another with its ten thousand eyes upon you. They are the commonest of creatures, indeed too common—if flies will forgive the remark! And yet, although they are so common, there are certain questions about a fly which you would find difficult to answer. How does a fly walk on the ceiling? Why do you so often find dead flies on the window-panes? Why do some flies buzz and others not buzz? Can flies see in the dark? When you try to

catch them, why is it they see your hand so quickly? What do they eat? Are little flies children of the big flies?

You know the fly belongs to the largest family in the world—Insects. Insects are so called because they look as if they were 'cut into,' as it were. They have no neck to speak of; they are in three parts, just held together by a thread, first the head by itself, then the chest with the six legs, and then the rest of the body. When a fly is born a fly, he is born full-grown; and he never grows any more! 'Oh!' you say, 'that is strange.' But no more strange than that some full-grown people should be bigger than other full-grown people. A fly has babies, but they are not at all like their parents—not a bit! So that not even the greatest flatterer could say, 'How like his father!' Like a moth or daddy-long-legs the fly lays eggs which hatch out into small worms, very much like those little grubs that you see in cheese and in nuts. Indeed cheese-mites are first cousins to the tiny fly-grubs. Their great business is to eat and grow; and they grow so fast, and eat so much that at last their coats are too small for them. When *your* coat is too small, your mother puts the buttons forward a little; the fly's mother cannot do that. So when he has eaten too much the only thing is for him to stop eating. And inside his coat there is a larger coat, all crinkly and folded up. Then the old coat cracks off and the new coat remains; but it is many sizes too big for him! So he blows it out with air, which he sucks in through his tubes; and then he goes to sleep again.

But the most wonderful changes are going on, until at last one day in the sunshine out comes a fly. How does it get out? When you open a matchbox you touch the spring and open flies the box. Only he is *inside*, and like a chicken in the egg he hammers away with his head until out he comes. Then he unpacks his trunk and his six legs and his feelers and wings, and off he flies. And he is just as big then as on the day of his death. Live he ever so long he will never grow.

Flies are very light, for they have air-bags underneath their stomachs. And they buzz and paddle about in the air very quickly, their wings beating 600 times to a second. A fly can beat a race-horse. A fly, I suppose, talks, just as an ant talks! He has the same sort of feelers as an ant has; and ants, when they meet in the road, very often cross their feelers and talk to one another. I should very much like to hear what an ant says, but we have not discovered the cipher of their language yet! We shall find the 'Rosetta-stone' of that one day, I dare say. Every now and then you see flies buzzing around one another and stopping for a chat in the air. What do they talk about?

Do you know what the trunk of a fly is? It is a long thin tube for sucking up juices, for flies eat up things that are going rotten. Do you know where the fly's eyes are? Three of them are on the top of the head, but his whole head is one mass of eyes, so

that the fly can look at once nearly all round. I cannot describe it: you must look for yourself through a microscope, and at the same time you should look at the fly's foot; it has claws which fit into the smallest crevices, and two pads covered with long hairs, and each hair has sticky fluid on it. So it is that a fly can walk on the ceiling upside down.

I heard the other day one little child say to another, 'You haven't the heart of a fly, or you would not do that'. I thought to myself, that is rather unfair to a fly, because a fly has a very big heart, for a fly. A heart that reaches all over his body, from end to end; and a plucky little creature a fly is.

I am always very sorry for flies, though I cannot say that I love them: for I am glad that as we get cleaner in our habits and in our houses, the flies get scarcer. Why? Because fly's eggs are laid in dirt: and wherever there are many flies there is sure to be much dirt. Thirty years ago there were many more flies than now. But I am always very sorry for flies, because in the autumn they die of a terrible disease. I don't mean the spiders. When we come down in the morning and look at the window-panes, we say, 'Ah! there are six dead flies on the window-panes'. And there is a kind of white stuff about them adhering to the glass. A few years ago in France they found that the silkworms were dying of a terrible disease, and they sent men into the district to find out about it. And those men were so clever that they stopped the disease. It was very much the same disease that a fly dies of. But there is no M. Pasteur to look into the illnesses of flies, still less to cure them. A mould eats into them, eats them hollow, so that only the case is left. A fly weighs very little, a couple of thousand of them go to an ounce; but a dead fly is pathetically lighter still. The wise man of olden days said that dead flies in the sweetest perfume will cause it to rot and smell horribly. And, said he, in exactly the same way, one foolish deed will work mischief throughout a whole life. How many sad stories of men's lives there are which can be summed up in those sad lines of the poet:—

The little rift within the lute

That by and by will make the music mute.

Be careful to keep your life sweet and clean. One meanness, one falsehood may mar so much. The Crimean War, with all its fearful pain and trouble, arose from a miserable quarrel whether a Greek priest or a Latin priest should keep the key of the door of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. So much harm is made by one 'dead fly in the ointment,' one bad thing that gets into the mind and heart, and stays there.—BERNARD J. SNELL, *The Good God*, p. 95.

#### THE WARNING NOT TO FORGET GOD

'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'—  
ECCLESIASTES XII. 1.

I. In the First Place, we ought to Mind this Warning for 'The Lord's Sake'.—Our first illustration may be called—minding God.



'I wish I could mind God as my little dog minds me,' said a little boy, looking thoughtfully at his shaggy friend; 'he always seems so pleased to mind, and I don't.'

That little dog obeyed his young master for his master's sake. He really loved him, and tried to show his love by the cheerful, ready way in which he obeyed him. This was the right thing for him to do; and it is just what God expects us to do. When He says, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' He means that we should do this for His sake, to show our love to Him; just as that little dog showed his love to his master, by doing gladly and cheerfully whatsoever he told him to do.

Our next illustration may be called—the one gift.

There is one gift which we may all make to God, and which He will value more than anything else we can possibly offer to Him. It is that to which He refers when He says, 'My son, give me thine heart'. If we had millions of money, and we should offer it all to God, it would be worth nothing to Him, unless we first gave Him our hearts.

A little Sabbath school girl brought a present to her teacher of a bouquet of beautiful flowers.

'And why do you bring me these?' asked her teacher.

'Because I love you,' was her quick reply.

'And do you bring anything to Jesus?' asked the teacher.

'Oh, yes,' was her reply, 'I have given my heart to Jesus.' That was a beautiful answer. And that is just what Jesus expects each one of us to do. He wants us to remember Him in our youth, and to give Him our hearts, as this little girl had done. And He wants us to do this for His own sake, and out of love to Him. And then everything we do for Him, and everything we give to Him, will be pleasing and acceptable to Him.

**II. The Second Reason why we should do this is 'For Our Own Sake.'**—When we really begin to remember God and to keep His commandments God says to each of us, as He said to the Israelites in old times, 'From this day will I bless you'. And God's blessing is worth more to us than all the world beside. If the wealth of all the rich men in the world were ours, it would do us no good without God's blessing. But that blessing can make us happy, without any of the gold and silver which men prize so much. When the good poet Cowper was speaking on this point, he looked up to his God and Saviour and said:—

Give what Thou wilt, without Thee we are poor,  
But with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

And this is true. If we only have God with us, He can supply the place of all other things; but there is nothing else that can supply His place. And so we see how important it is *for our own sakes* that we should 'remember our Creator in the days of our youth'. Our peace, our safety, our usefulness, our happiness, our everything, depends upon it.

Now let us look at some illustrations of this part

of our subject. The first incident shows us the evil that must follow, if we do not remember our Creator, when He calls upon us to do so. We may call it—*not yet*.

'Remember now thy Creator' was once said to a little boy.

'Not yet,' said the boy, as he busied himself with his bat and ball; 'when I grow older I will think about it.'

The little boy grew to be a young man.

'Remember now thy Creator,' his conscience said to him.

'Not yet,' said the young man; 'I am now about to begin my trade; when I see my business prosper, I shall have more time than I can command now.'

His business did prosper.

'Remember now thy Creator,' conscience whispered to him.

'Not yet,' said the man of business; 'my children must now have my care; when they are settled in life I shall be better able to attend to the claims of religion.'

He lived to be a grey-headed old man.

'Remember now thy Creator,' was the voice which conscience once more addressed to him.

'Not yet,' was still his cry; 'I shall soon retire from business, and then I shall have nothing else to do but read and pray.'

Soon after this he died without becoming a Christian. He put off to another time what he should have attended to when young, and *that* caused the loss of his soul. Those two little words—*Not yet*—were his ruin.

Our next story may be called Jessie's six cents.

Some time ago a pale-faced little girl walked hastily into a book-store in Boston, and said to the man who was serving at the counter:—

'Please, sir, I want a book that's got "Suffer little children to come unto Me," in it, and how much is it, sir? and I am in a great hurry.'

The shopkeeper looked kindly at her for a moment, and said, 'Well, suppose I haven't got the book you want, what then, my dear?'

'Oh, sir, I shall be very sorry; I want it so much,' and her little voice trembled at the thought of a disappointment.

The kind shopkeeper took her little hand in his, and said, 'Will you be so very sad without the book, and why are you in such a hurry?'

'Well, sir, you see, I went to Sunday school one Sunday, when Mrs. West, who takes care of me, was away; and the teacher read about a Good Shepherd, who spoke those words; and I want to go where He is. I'm so tired of being where there's nobody to care for a little girl like me, only Mrs. West, who is always saying I'd better be dead than alive.'

'But why are you in such a hurry?' asked the bookseller.

'Why, you see, sir, my cough is getting bad, and I want to know all about this "Good Shepherd" before I die; it would be so strange to see Him in

heaven and not know Him. Besides, sir, if Mrs. West knew I was here, she'd take away the six cents I've saved by running errands, to buy the book, so I'm in a hurry to get served.'

This touched the bookseller's heart very much, and filled his eyes with tears. Then he took off his spectacles and wiped them; and lifting a book down from the shelf, he said, 'I'll find the words you want, my dear child; come and listen while I read them'. Then he turned to the fifteenth verse of the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke, and read these words: 'But Jesus called them'—i.e. the infants—'unto Him, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God"'. Then the good man told how this blessed Saviour has prepared a glorious home in heaven—a home of rest, and peace, and joy, and happiness, and where He will take all who love and serve Him to live with Him for ever.

'Oh! how lovely that is!' exclaimed the dear child in her eagerness. 'He says "Come". I'll go to Him. How long do you think it will be, sir, before I shall see Him?'

'Not long, perhaps,' said the bookseller, turning aside his head, and wiping away the tears. 'You may keep your six cents, and come here every day, and I will read to you more about this good Friend and Saviour of little children.'

Then she thanked him very heartily and hurried away. The next day came, and another, and another, but that little girl never returned to hear about Jesus.

One day, about two weeks after this, a coarse-looking woman, with a loud voice, ran into the book-store, saying, 'Jessie's dead! She died talking about the Good Shepherd, and she said you was to have these six cents for the mission box at school. And as I don't like to keep dead people's money, here it is.' And throwing the money down on the counter, she ran out of the shop.

The six cents went into the missionary box, and when the story of Jessie was told, so many people followed her example in making offerings to the good cause, that by the end of the year, 'Jessie's cents,' as they were called, were found sufficient to send out a missionary to China, to help in bringing lost sheep to the Good Shepherd.

Here we see how Jessie remembered her Creator, as soon as she heard of Him. And it was for *her own sake* she did it. She had no friend, no help, no comfort in the world, but she found everything she needed in Jesus. She never said, 'Not yet,' like the last person spoken of. But as soon as she heard of Jesus, she said 'Now'—and came to Him at once. And this has made her happy for ever.

**III. And then there is a Third Reason why we should Mind the Warning of the Text, or 'Remember our Creator in the Days of our Youth,' and that is 'For the Sake of Others.'—**God's promise to Abraham, when he began to serve Him, was that he should be a blessing. And God says

the same thing to all His people. When Jesus was on earth we are told that 'He went about doing good'. And He desires that all who love and serve Him, should follow His example in this respect, and 'tread in the blessed steps of His most holy life'. And in doing this, we can make ourselves real blessings to those who are about us. We can help to lead them to Jesus, if they do not know Him already. And if they do know Him, we can speak words of comfort and encouragement to them. And not only by our words, but by our actions, and by our prayers, we may be doing good, all the time, to those about us.

When Joseph lived in the house of Potiphar, in Egypt, God blessed all that household for his sake. And when David, the King of Israel, came back from one of his warlike expeditions, we read that 'he returned to bless his household'. And this will be the case with us if we 'remember our Creator in the days of our youth,' and become real earnest Christians. Then we shall be blessings wherever we go. Let us look now at an illustration of the way in which this may be done.

Grandpa was sick, and little Fannie loved to be with him, and to read to him. She would sit down by his bedside and say, 'Shall I read my story, grandpa?'

And the story to which she referred was that in the New Testament, which begins with 'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem'. She called it 'my story,' because she liked it so much, and she never got tired of reading it. One day, when she had finished reading, she said:—

'Grandpa, you are a wise man, but you didn't have to take a long journey to find Jesus, like the wise men I was reading about, did you?'

'What makes you think I didn't?' asked grandpa, with a trembling voice.

'Because, grandpa, Jesus stays right by us, all the time; so we've only got to whisper to Him, and He hears us.'

The days went on, and one evening not long after this, all the family gathered round grandpa's bed to say 'good-bye' to him before he died.

When he came to speak to little Fannie, he laid his hand gently on her head and said, 'Good-bye, my darling. When I get to heaven, the beautiful city, I will tell the blessed Saviour that you were my star.'

'Oh, grandpa, why?' asked Fannie, as the tears streamed down her cheeks.

'Because, darling, you led me to Jesus, just as the star you have often read about led the wise men to Him. And your light shone so steadily that I could not lose my way.' And here we see how remembering her Creator in the days of her youth made little Fannie a blessing to her grandpa.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 9.

## THE GOLDEN BOWL

'Or ever the golden bowl be broken.'—ECCLESIASTES XII. 6.

What does the preacher intend to represent by this golden bowl? It is perfectly clear that it is human life. God, the great Artist, made human life the noblest thing in the universe. The human type is the highest type of created being, and no higher type or pattern can ever appear. God made it in His own image. His image must be a perfect image, and therefore the copy of it in man must be as perfect as a copy can be. He made it a golden bowl of exquisite workmanship, fearfully and wonderfully framed, into which He could pour His glory. It is not the spirit alone that bears the image of God; it is the body and the spirit combined. The body is not the mere garment of the soul: it is an essential part of our humanity, moulded from within, expressing in outward form the vital activity of the soul, as the leaves and flowers express the life of a plant. Being what we are we could have no other body. Body and soul together make the individual person. It is a true union: the twain are one flesh. What an honour did God confer upon this complex human nature when He chose it for the manifestation of Himself to His creatures in the person of His Son Jesus Christ! How amazingly did He exalt it when He set the glorified humanity of our Lord at His own right hand on the everlasting throne!

I. Human life is not a golden bowl that is wonderfully fashioned in this manner only to remain empty and useless; nor is it enough merely to clean, polish, and decorate the outside of the cup; to carry the culture of the body to the fitness and completeness of the Greek standard. It is meant to be filled with God. Of all God's creatures on earth, man alone can comprehend God and hold communion with Him. The golden bowl of human nature was made for the very purpose of receiving God, and holding Him as no other receptacle can. For this purpose it has a large capacity: a wide open mouth, able to take in all heaven and all eternity. And if it was so made, then there must be a God to fill it, to justify its making. Our reason tells us that no part or organ of man was made in vain. Whatever capacities you have, there are things existing to satisfy them. There is bread for your hunger, water for your thirst, light for your eye to see with, sound for your ear to hear with. If, therefore, the soul of man longs for God, then there is a God to satisfy that longing. Because you are made for God, and because you can trust in Him and live for Him, for that very reason, if there was no other, you can believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him.

II. The love of God is the greatest, most satisfying, and most lasting good in the universe. It is the first love of your nature, and you only return to it from the love of idols when you give your heart to God. That love of God is a most wonderful thing! How much is included in it! The gift of God's own Son, His life and death, resurrection and ascension, your own sorrow for sin, your own faith in Jesus Christ,

your own trust in God's promises—the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. The golden bowl of your nature was fashioned to receive and keep all this. And it is because the love of God in Christ Jesus is so precious that the vessel has been made so precious to receive it. Nothing but a golden bowl wonderfully constructed could worthily contain such glory. You feel, therefore, with what force the great lesson which the preacher draws from it comes home to you, 'Or ever the golden bowl is broken, remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth'. Before this wonderful being of yours, so richly endowed with all these capacities of knowing God and holding high communion with Him, of turning from sin and selfishness and worldliness to serve Him with all your heart—before this wonderful complex being of yours is broken into its component parts and the wine of life spilt irrevocably upon the ground, remember your Creator. Remember Him in the days of your youth, when you are in full health and vigour and are most fitted to love and serve Him. Remember Him when the golden bowl is most beautiful, and its lustre and rich carving are undimmed by the breath of the world, and its shape is not battered by rough usage, before you have filled it with other inferior perishing things which exclude God and preoccupy your heart, and cannot truly satisfy you. Now your golden bowl is comparatively empty: the world has not yet filled it. It is fresh from the workmanship of God. You can receive now with the greatest ease the experience of His love, and you can keep it at its sweetest and best.

III. It is upon the golden bowl as it is now, as it is fashioned and used in this world, that this great future of its destiny depends. It depends upon how you use it here how you shall enjoy it hereafter. It is in this life only that the golden bowl can be filled with God's love and turned to God's service. The changes of the grave will not restore the opportunities that have been lost, will not make up for neglect and misuse now. Who knows when the golden bowl is once broken—when the body is reduced to dust and ashes, and the spirit set free from its earthly tabernacle, like the lamps of Gideon when the pitchers that contained them were broken—who knows whether in this divided state a human being is capable of receiving the grace of God that bringeth salvation? The body moulding in the dust is not the human being; the spirit in its disembodied condition is not the human being. It needs both to be united to form the human personality. It follows therefore that when they are separated there can be no more probation. Only when body, soul, and spirit exist in their present wonderful combination are you sure that you can be a golden bowl capable of receiving and loving and serving God. Before this golden bowl is broken, remember then your Creator. Let Him come into your heart and life now. And though the golden bowl be broken by death, the scent of the noble use you have made of it will cling imperishably to it when reconstructed for most enduring service in heaven.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 337.



# SONG OF SOLOMON

## LILIES AND THORNS

'The lily among thorns.'—SONG OF SOLOMON II. 2.

THAT is hardly where you would expect to find a lily—growing among thorns. It doesn't matter what kind of a lily you think about, they are all fair and beautiful, and delicate and sweet, not at all like the bold, hard, sharp, and piercing thorns. There is no flower in all the world that is so pleasant in itself or so sweet in its perfume, as the lily of the valley. Modest and pure, it meekly hangs its slender bells and sways them gently to and fro when the warm, kind breath of the summer breathes upon them, and I think the angels must hear the music they make—music to them as precious as a prayer. Think of a gentle, sweet, modest little flower like that growing up in a coarse furze-bush or a thorny brake! Why, it is like thinking of a dove among vultures.

And there's the white lily, spotless and polished as the purest alabaster. What a stranger it looks among the black-bunched thorns! It is like a snow-white lamb among cruel sharp-toothed wolves.

Yes, but that is just what a Christian boy or Christian girl, a Christian man or a Christian woman, has to be in this world: like a 'lily among thorns'.

Let us think about this for a little.

I. Don't forget, then, how beautiful the lily is. I don't think you are likely to forget that, but I fear all of us forget too often how beautiful a Christian boy or girl is in the eyes of Jesus. You see we haven't a mirror to show us exactly what we are like as Jesus sees us. The only mirror that could show us that is Jesus Himself. For, just as you look in the mirror and see what like you are, so when we love Jesus and He loves us, as we look up to Him we see what we shall one day come to be ourselves. For every one who loves Jesus shall come to be like Him. Isn't Jesus beautiful? Ah, yes, He is very, very beautiful. He is 'the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely'. There is never a flower on the earth that can compare with Him for loveliness. It is the delight of all in heaven to gaze on Him, and you must make it your delight too. You may think you are very plain when you look in the glass mirror, and other people may fail to see anything very beautiful about you either; but when Jesus looks on any one who loves Him, in His eyes that one is very, very lovely indeed—with a loveliness that shall grow and grow till it comes to be like that of the King Himself in His beauty.

If you love Jesus, never forget what He thinks of you; it will help you many and many a time when you would be cast down, for it always does us good

to know we are good in the eyes of those who are good. The lily is very beautiful; even Solomon in all his glory was not so glorious in the eyes of men as every Christian boy or girl is in the eyes of Jesus.

But in this world of ours these lilies of the Lord always grow among thorns. I think you are beginning now to guess what that means. Sometimes there is a very wicked family; the father swears, and the mother drinks, and the brothers and sisters are very, very sinful in all their ways; but there is one little child in that family who does love Jesus. Oh, how that little one must be like a lily among thorns! How pained that little heart must often be at what it has to see and what it has to hear! Yes, yes, it must often have to be wounded in spirit by the wickedness round about it, just as the fair and beautiful lily must often be wounded by the thorns when the wind comes shaking the bush.

II. Now let me speak about the thorns that are round about God's lilies.

Thorns don't hurt one another; oh, no! but thorns easily wound the lilies. There are people who are never troubled at all about the sinful things that are round about them; they hardly notice them, never think of them, never *feel* them. No; that is because they are thorns themselves, and thorns don't feel the pricking of thorns. But the lily feels it; and the more you want to love Jesus, and to keep pure, and to do the things that please Him, the more you will often feel pained and sad by the sinful things that are round you. Well, be glad that you get sad about these things. It shows that you are not a thorn; you are a lily. If you were a thorn you wouldn't feel the thorns; but because you are a lily, you do feel them, and feel them very much. Never let yourself get accustomed to sin, for the more you feel it, the more you tremble at it, the more it hurts you, the better you are keeping off it, and the fairer you will grow, like the lily.

You wouldn't think it at first, perhaps, but yet it is the case; we can learn a great deal of wisdom from the thorns. If you see a lily growing among them you will notice how it learns to twine its stem and turn its flowers this way or that, so as to get the widest and safest openings among the thorns that it can; to get most sunshine and fewest stings. And that is what we have to learn—how to live among those who don't love the Lord, and yet avoid all we can having our souls injured by them. When there is a sharp thorn just in the way of the lily, it doesn't thrust itself upon it and push against it, so as to drive away the thorn. It couldn't do that—it would

only wound itself; so when it sees the thorn in its way, it quietly turns aside from it and passes it by. That is what you must learn to do. Don't answer the angry word with the angry one; a soft answer turneth away wrath, and you are better to turn it away, or to turn away from it, than let it wound you, as it would do if you tried to meet anger with anger. The meekness of the lily wins the day in the end, for it allows it to grow up beautiful, and all men love it; and Jesus says, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth'. Yes, when the thorns are burnt, the lilies are kept; they are made welcome to the crown as their rightful inheritance. The lily learns how to grow among the thorns, and still keep growing like a lily, and that is what you must seek to learn too. Jesus can teach you how. He says that if anyone wants wisdom, let him ask of Him, and He will teach him. So, whenever you would know what you should do, ask Jesus.

And here is another thing you mightn't have thought about—we need the thorns sometimes to keep us right with God. Their woundings make us watchful; and we would soon grow careless about God if things didn't happen sometimes to *make* us remember Him.

But the thorns also keep off from us much that would do us harm. If the lily grew alone in the forest it would soon be trampled down; but when the thorns are round about it, the hardest hoofs don't care to go too near. And that is sometimes why God lets trouble come upon us. Trouble is very thorny, and we don't like it; but God knows what we need, and He sees the danger that would come upon us, and so He sends the thorns round about. The canary in the cage may think it hard that it cannot have its liberty like other birds. It doesn't know that the same cage that is shutting it in is shutting out many dangers that other birds are exposed to; for while it is in the cage it is taken care of, winter and summer it has both its food and its protection. And sometimes people who do love Jesus are cast upon beds of sickness, and the pain is like thorns to them; and they often wonder why it should be so. One day they will learn that Jesus was keeping them in a cage, as it were, in order to keep them from danger into which otherwise they would surely have fallen.

At the last the lilies are transplanted; the gardener comes and takes the beautiful flower and bears it lovingly to his own garden, but the thorns one day he cuts down. It is not easy to transplant the lilies that grow among thorns, the hand that would do it must be scratched and wounded. But that is just what the hand of Jesus has been for us—it has been wounded that we might be transplanted into the garden above. Trust that loving hand, and even among thorns, for Christ's sake, grow up as the lilies.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 141.

## SPRING

(Eastertide)

'Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come.—SONG OF SOLOMON II. 11, 12.

If we did not know that heaven will be far more beautiful than anything we can dream of here, we might almost fancy that there *could* be nothing more beautiful than the first burst of spring. It is one of the great blessings of living in the country to be allowed to see the wonderful beauty of God's works as the seasons come and go. But of all the seasons spring seems the fairest and the sweetest. Does it not make every one happy to say, 'Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come'? Well, perhaps not every one; but I am very sorry for those who are not made happy by the beauty and sweetness of the spring. I can remember well the unspeakable delight it was to me, when I was quite a child, to see the little green points of the crocus leaves breaking through the soil. It told me spring was coming, and the flowers were going to appear on the earth. My heart used to be brimful of praise to God, in those old days long ago, at many a little token of His love, which I fear I think much less of now, perhaps (I hope it is so) because I have greater things to take up my attention. Yet I hope God will let me love the flowers and the singing of the birds as long as I live here, and that I shall not quite forget to thank Him for the joy they bring year by year.

There was a great man once, who thought it so good for everybody to see and love God's beautiful gift of flowers that he used to say, 'If you have money enough to buy two loaves, by one loaf and a bunch of flowers'.

I hope you love flowers, but still more that you love Him who made the flowers. You like to see the hedge-banks studded all over with primroses and violets, or, still better, to go into the copse and see all the ground as blue as the sky with thousands of bluebells. It makes your heart glad. I wonder whether it ever makes your heart thankful. I wonder whether, when you see how beautiful God's world is, you ever lift up your heart to Him secretly in a little act of praise, and say something of this sort, 'O God, how beautiful Thy works are! I thank Thee for Thy goodness'?

And now I want you to think whether the spring-time, with the flowers appearing on the earth, has anything to tell you about another world. God writes parables all about the world. Jesus Christ shows us how to find them. When He saw flowers, or trees, or the sowing of corn, or the setting of the sun, He knew what each had got to tell. Supposing He had walked with His disciples in the early spring, and seen the flowers just bursting from the ground, do you think He could have found a parable in it? I think so. Shall I try to find one, and tell you what I think God teaches us in the spring-time? Perhaps it is something like this; see,

the winter is past, and the flowers appear on the earth; they have lain dead and buried for months under the cold ground, but now they are breaking through on every side; the warm sun is waking them up to new life: behold how fair they are in their new clothing of many colours. The flowers are the children of God: the winter is death. Now you can finish the meaning yourselves. When will be the spring-time for these flowers? [At the Resurrection of the Last Day.] And who will be like the sun, calling them up from their long sleep in the earth? [Jesus Christ.] Yes, you remember that He is called the 'Sun of righteousness'. So I think the lesson of the spring-time is a lesson of Resurrection—an Easter lesson. It tells us how the bodies of those who sleep in Jesus will rise, all bright and beautiful and glorious, like the flowers from their wintry grave. It tells us that there will be a new Easter for us all, when we shall rise, even as Jesus Himself rose at blessed Eastertide. It tells us of a new spring-time for those who are sown in the cold earth, like the seeds in autumn—a beautiful endless spring-time. It tells us of the 'new heavens' and the 'new earth' which God will create, 'wherein dwelleth righteousness'. So spring is full of hope, for God has set in our hearts a 'lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' and the flowers and the trees and the birds all echo the same glad hope, and say, 'The dead shall rise again'; and we take up the happy truth in our Creeds and say, I believe in the Resurrection of 'the dead'.

I think this is what is meant by a line in one of our beautiful Easter hymns—a hymn sung in Greek by the Christians in Greece, and translated into English by Dr. Neale, who gave us so many other of our favourite hymns in the same way—'Tis the spring of souls to-day'. Our souls are full of the bright happiness and the glorious hopes of spring-time.

I like to see snowdrops planted on graves. In our churchyard there are snowdrops on a great many of the graves; and I like to see it, not because it is so pretty, but because of what the snowdrops have to tell us. For a person must be very dull who cannot hear the sweet lesson the snowdrops whisper to us year by year, as they come out in their snowy purity, almost the very first flowers of the spring. 'Even thus,' they seem to say, 'as fair and as pure as we are, shall the dead in Christ arise, when their long winter of death is past, and the everlasting spring is come.'

I remember a very dear little child being buried once in the spring. It was a bright warm day and all the ground was gay with flowers. The blue Veronica was in bloom, and the hawthorns were all white with May (as you call the hawthorn blossom), so it was not quite the early spring. And four little girls, all dressed in white, carried the little coffin, and the father and mother were crying sadly, for it seemed very hard to them that their dear child should be taken away from a world so sweet and so fair, and in

which she would have been (as they thought) so happy. Ah! but they had forgotten in their grief the beautiful garden of Paradise, a thousand times more lovely than anything here, where their little one was gone. And they had forgotten the new spring-time that is to come, when that little form they loved so well, and were hiding in the dark grave, would blossom like the spring flowers, and rise in heavenly beauty. Perhaps, if they planted flowers on her little grave, and came again the next spring, and saw them blooming there, they might think of these things and be comforted. Let us hope so.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 58.

#### LITTLE FOXES SPOIL THE VINES

'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.'—SONG OF SOLOMON II. 15.

WHAT are 'the vines'? What are 'the grapes'? What are 'the foxes'?

First, what are 'vines'? Let us look at John xv. 5. Jesus Christ there speaks of Himself as 'the vine'. But everybody who loves Him—who gives his heart to Him—is joined to Jesus Christ, just like a branch is joined to a tree, and so becomes part of the vine. Jesus is 'the True Vine'. When you love Him and give your hearts to Him, then your hearts are joined to Jesus Christ, and your hearts become the Vine. Then, our hearts are 'the vines'.

What are 'the grapes'? The grapes are the fruit of the vine. And what do 'grapes' mean? Our religion. What is religion? To love God—to try to please Him. These are 'grapes'. To love God and to try to delight Him, to believe in Him—these are 'grapes'. There can be no 'grapes' till we have given our hearts to Christ. Because we can't be vines till we are joined to the grape vine. Jesus is 'the True Vine'; and when our hearts are joined to Jesus, we become 'vines,' and then we can have 'grapes'. We can love God by trying to please Him.

Now, what are 'the foxes'? Foxes are very sly and cunning things. I will tell you three things which 'the fox' is very sly about.

One thing is, the way he makes his home. You know that foxes live in burrows in the earth. A rabbit burrows in the ground; but there is a great difference between the burrow of a rabbit and that of a fox. The burrow of a rabbit has one opening, sometimes two, though very seldom; but the fox's burrow has a great many, so that he gets in and out all sorts of sly ways; and when the dogs are hunting him at one hole, he can run out at another.

Another thing the fox is very cunning in is this, he very seldom runs straight: he runs zigzag—up and down—sideways. What is good always goes straight. Truth goes straight. A good little girl or boy goes straight. A fox does not. He is like something else which does not always go straight.

Another cunning thing the fox does is to pretend to be dead when he is not dead. Sometimes when the dogs are running after him he pretends this.



Something else pretends to be dead when not dead. Do you know what it is? What is it which has such funny ways of coming in and out of our hearts, and seems dead, when quite alive? What is it? I think you know. If you do, you will understand about these 'foxes'.

There were a great many 'foxes' in the Holy Land. Samson once caught three hundred, and tied them up together and drove them into fields of corn. Travellers say there are a great many now, though not so many as there used to be. 'Foxes' come into the vineyards, but they are 'little' ones; they don't jump over the hedge, but get in through their holes.

And they do two bad things; one is, that they suck 'the grapes,' and get all the sweetness out; and the next is, they trample on them, bruise, spoil, and knock them off.

Do you know the worst thing that *sin* does? Can you think? It destroys God's grace in our hearts. It is a dreadful thing to tell a lie; or to be proud; or to do anything that's wicked. This destroys religion in your hearts. When sin enters it drives out good thoughts—destroys good things in your hearts. 'Little foxes' destroy 'the grapes'.

Let us read the text again. 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.' The 'grapes' are very 'tender'. Good thoughts are often very weak, and very soon go away. If you have a garden now, I dare say you have some buds on the trees; but they are so tender that anything will kill them. If we had some sharp frosts, they would kill the buds; but the tenderest bud on the rose or gooseberry bush is not half so 'tender' as your little thoughts. Beware of 'the foxes,' or your buds will be in danger.

I. And now, think with me about some of the things which these 'little foxes' take out of our hearts; that, when we try to be good, make us naughty; prevent us from being what we wish to be.

I wonder, if you were preaching the sermon, if you could think anything about 'the foxes'. Can you think? Mind it says—'little foxes': therefore you must expect to find them 'little' things. Perhaps you are thinking about *great* things; 'little' things do all the mischief. I have always found this so—haven't you? Great things keep 'foxes' out—don't they?

If any boys or girls were to get up in the morning and not say their prayers—not really pray—that would make a hole, and a 'fox' would come in. If they did not read their Bible in the morning it would make a hole, and the 'fox' would come in. Some sin would come in.

You may say, 'Oh! it is a very little thing'; but don't let in the 'little' things, or presently some great thing will come in, and destroy all the good.

I will tell you what I have read in the history of Holland. Now Holland is a very flat country—lower than the level of the sea—and because it is lower than the sea, the inhabitants are obliged to make great dykes along the shore to keep out the water;

it is a very dreadful thing for a leak to come in the dyke, as the water would come through, and flood the country for miles.

It is mentioned in the history of Holland that once a little boy, one evening, was walking by the side of one of the dykes, and he saw a little hole in one; and though he was but a little boy, he had heard what a dangerous thing it was for a hole to be in the dyke; and so, instead of running home as most little boys would have done, and let the water come through, he put his own hand against the little hole to prevent the water coming through, hoping somebody would come past and relieve him. Night came on, and it was very cold, and miserable, and dark, and there that little boy stood all night with his little hand against the hole, to keep the water from coming in.

Early next morning the minister coming by, saw this noble, heroic, brave little boy, who thought only of others' good, and had remained all night there to keep the water from coming through that little hole. What a wise boy he was! So, you see, a little hole will often cause (if unstopped) great mischief.

In Matthew v. 18, our Saviour said, 'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled'. Do you know what 'jots and tittles' are? Boys who understand Greek will know. One means a little dot *above* the word, and the other a little dot *under* it. Do you care about the 'jots and tittles'? Are they but very 'little' things?

I will tell you a very wonderful thing that happened some time ago in North America. I think it will surprise you. A swarm of flies stopped a train—a long train, with heavy carriages, going at the rate of twenty miles per hour. I will tell you how it happened, and you must promise me to think what it means.

In some of the railway carriages in North America they put the grease in a box over the wheel; the friction of the wheel's movements causes the grease to melt, and enables the wheel to go round nicely. If the grease does not come down, the wheel will get hot, and will set the carriage on fire.

One day the engineer saw one of the wheels was getting hot—red hot; he stopped the train to examine the cause; and he found a number of flies had got into the grease box, and prevented it running down the wheel; so you see the flies stopped the train.

'Little' things, like flies, stop things more important than trains: they stop the course of a Christian. 'Little foxes'—little things—little thoughts, come and stop you.

Now I will tell you of other things which will do you a great deal of harm if you let them come in your heart. Sometimes, when you kneel down to say your prayers, you find a great many silly, wandering thoughts come into your mind. You wish to think about God, and pray; but your thoughts wander about so much, you think of one thing, that leads to another; and then your thoughts go anywhere, to

the end of the world. Don't you know anything about these wandering thoughts, these sad 'little foxes' which spoil many a prayer?

Perhaps some of you now are having wandering thoughts. I wonder whether you are. I dare say somebody is thinking about something very different to my sermon. These are 'little foxes'.

II. Now, how shall we catch these 'foxes'? How can we check these silly thoughts? Shall I give you a little advice? It is not an easy matter.

Whenever you find a wandering thought, stop in a minute, put your hands up, keep your thoughts from wandering.

Again. If you get up from your knees, and know that it has not been a real prayer, kneel down again; if it happens so the next time, do it again; if it happens six times, do it six times, till you conquer; and if you have done it several times and conquered, you won't be beaten so easily next time, because the habit will be formed in you. Do not mind how many times you kneel down daily, but say your prayers till you have conquered.

I remember an old man telling me he had said the Lord's Prayer seven times running before he could say it as he wished. That is the way to do it. And then pray to God to help you. It is a very good thing before you kneel down sometimes to say, 'How am I going to pray? What shall I say?' If you think a little before, it will help you to think without wandering thoughts, and so you will catch the 'foxes'. Therefore, if you are going to be religious and serve God, you must bring your whole mind to Him. You must do it in right earnest. St. Paul said, 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. He was in earnest about it.

There was once a young man (of course I won't mention names) who went to church one evening. He was not in the habit of doing this, because he was very gay and wild. He liked the sermon very much indeed; and he thought, 'Now I will go straight home from this church to my own room, and pray to God,' a thing which he had not been in the habit of doing. But he did not pray *at once* where he was. It would have been better if he had uttered a prayer there; but he did not: I wish he had. If you think rightly in a church, pray in a moment, 'Lord, keep this good thought in my heart'. This young man said, 'I will go home and pray'.

However, when he left the church, and had gone out into the street, two of his young friends met him, and said, 'We are going to a party; come with us'. The young man replied very faintly, 'No, I think not to-night'. They looked in his face, and thought there was rather a different expression there than usual, and said, 'What, are you turned religious?' He could not stand that, and laughed outright—'Oh, no! oh, no! of course I am not: I will go with you'.

That young man never returned to his own room again—he died suddenly that night. Oh! can you manage to keep out these 'little foxes'? There was a good thought; religion was beginning, but the 'fox' came in.

I will tell you another thing. There is a 'little fox' that spoils a great many 'grapes', and his name is 'To-morrow'. Do you understand? 'I will do it to-morrow!' 'Oh, yes,' you say, 'I mean to be very religious; I am going to be very good to-morrow, or next Sunday, or Monday.' 'To-morrow!' Take care! That is a sly temptation—'to-morrow!' 'I will begin by and by: not just now: I have a little more to think of, and to do first: I will be religious to-morrow.'

Do you remember who said something very much like that? Will you turn to Acts xxiv., and you will see a man there who had tender 'grapes'—just beginning to have them—and that 'fox' came and destroyed them all. Verse 25, 'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee".'

Do you remember who it was that, on being told to do a very hard thing, got up very early in the morning and went and did it? I think if he had delayed, he would not have done it.

I will now tell you of another dangerous 'fox' that does great harm in the world: perhaps he is in this church now—I mean pride, that spoils many 'grapes'. Will you look at 1 Timothy ii. 6. Before I read it, let me ask you, Which do you think most likely to be proud—a very old Christian, or a very young one? I think the youngest. Now, St. Paul says, respecting Timothy, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil'. 'Novice' means a person new at anything; pride makes 'novices'. Now take care.

Do you remember a young man spoken of in St. Matthew, who had some 'tender grapes'? He came to Christ to know what he must do to be saved; and he was a very rich young man, and Christ told him to 'sell all that he had, and give to the poor'; and his pride came and said, 'I, a young man of fortune, I, to give it all up? No, no, I can't'—and he went away in 'sorrow'.

Do you remember another young man, who, when he was going to be made a great man, went and hid himself; but when he was made a king, he became very proud? Pride 'spoiled' the 'tender grapes'.

I wonder whether you have ever felt like this. You have said your prayers, and you have said them better than usual; and you have thought when rising from your knees, 'How well I said my prayers!' If you have ever done so, then you have 'spoiled' that prayer. Pride has come in, and spoiled the 'tender grape'. Pride 'spoils' anything.

It is said in St. Matthew that the disciples went and 'told Jesus everything'. But it is not only to God I wish you to be open, but be open to man. Don't

have secrets—bad secrets. Don't render shame and hide it. I know it requires an effort, but you will be so happy after you have told it.

I should like to tell you about little Nancy. Her nurse put on her a white frock, and when she went down to her dinner, left her alone in the nursery. Now little Nancy crept downstairs to the drawing-room, admiring the many pretty things there; and among them a silver inkstand, which her mother had strictly forbidden her to touch. But poor Nancy was so tempted that she took up the pen, and dipped it in the ink; but thinking she heard some one coming, she shook the pen to try to get off the ink, and a large spot came upon her dress.

Poor Nancy then was terribly frightened. She ought to have gone direct to her mother and acknowledged her fault; she did not, but went up into the nursery, and tried to remove the spot with soap and water, but the more she washed it, the blacker it looked. At this she began to cry very much.

Soon her mamma came up, and said, 'My dear, what is the matter?' She told her mother all about it, and expressed her great sorrow. Her mother then said she should not punish, but forgive her.

Little Nancy was then desirous to get the dress clean, and her mother took out a little box with white powder, and painted the spot; it became yellow, then white, and the spot was removed. 'Now,' said her mother, 'just as I have washed out that spot, Christ's blood will wash out your sin, and then you may run about as happy as the day is long.'

So now you see, when at first she was not open the 'fox' came and 'spoilt' the 'tender grapes'; when she became open, all was made good. Try to catch these 'foxes'. You can stop them. Try! Try!

Listen to one more thing. Supposing you were to see from that ceiling a little thread come down; and suppose it were to touch you, and a voice said, 'That thread is from God,' you would not put it away from you—you would not break it, would you? You would be very careful of it. Perhaps some of you wish to be better. That is a little thread from God to you. Don't put it away, think of it; and that little thread will get stronger and stronger, until it becomes a golden chain and draws you up to God.—  
JAMES VAUGHAN.

### LITTLE FOXES

SONG OF SOLOMON II. 15.

THE subject which I wish to bring before you now is *little sins*. Strictly speaking, no sins are little. They are all great in the sight of God. But I use the word in the sense in which it is common to use it, as describing sins of a less glaring and flagrant kind. I do not need so much to warn you of the evil and danger of *big sins*, as people reckon them. You can hardly mistake them. You can hardly be deceived by them. You can hardly but be startled and alarmed when they come in your way. But *little sins* you do not think so much about; you are not so much afraid of. Like other little things, you

either despise them, or look on them with a kindly and indulgent eye. You think there is no occasion to trouble yourself much about them, and so they get in and do serious damage before ever you know what they are about.

Now to what shall we compare them? Not to such terrible beasts of prey as the *lion* and the *tiger*, of which everybody is afraid; but to the *fox*, which is so *cunning* and *mischievous*. The very mention of the name calls up these ideas. The fox starts up at most unexpected times and places. Its ingenuity and adroitness are proverbial. It leaves sad traces of its presence wherever it has been. Turn to the Song of Solomon ii. 15: 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes'.

We may regard the Lord Jesus as speaking here. He is speaking to His Church and people. Sometimes these are spoken of as the *vineyard*, sometimes as the *keepers* of the vineyard. He wished His people to be like Himself, to be beautiful and fruitful, so that He might go among them and look upon them with joy, and gather from them those fruits that were pleasing in His sight. He knew that they would not admit great sins, all at once, which would vex and grieve Him, and seem to indicate that they belonged to Satan rather than to Him. But He saw *little faults*, *little errors*, things that seemed trifling in themselves, creeping in among them, almost without being noticed—injuring them, cooling their love to Him, robbing them of their strength, blighting and destroying what was promising; and as a Husbandman who was concerned about and took delight in His vineyard, He called attention to this danger, and called to duty in connection with it: 'Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines'.

Let us look at the *little foxes* of which our text speaks—*What they are*, *What they do*, and *How to catch and kill them*.

I. **What the Little Foxes are**—what we are to understand as represented by them. In one view of the matter, *you* are in the vineyard, and inasmuch as there is much that is pleasing and promising about you, as still in early youth, it may be said, 'our vines have tender grapes,' easily injured, easily destroyed, and if injured now, scarcely getting the better of it in after life. *Big sins*, which might be represented by lions and tigers, and other beasts of prey, are meanwhile not so likely to attack you. *Little sins* are what you are most in danger of suffering from. And they are compared to *little foxes* because they are so *insignificant* and *innocent-looking*, and yet are so *cunning* and can do so much harm. They, as it were, say, 'You need not be afraid of us: we are so little, what harm can we do? Keep out the big foxes and other big beasts; but, surely, you need not meddle with us.'

There are a great many of these 'little foxes'. They do not all frequent the same vineyard. Different vineyards have different kinds of them—sometimes one in particular, sometimes two or three. I



cannot describe them all in detail. I cannot even name them all. We shall get hold of a few, and look at them.

The first little fox we shall look at is a *little lie*. Not a great, black, ugly lie, enough to make conscience cry out, and to startle yourself and everybody that knows of it, but a little untruth that does not hurt and need not frighten anybody. You said you saw a dozen of soldiers riding along the street, when there were only four. You said you had been two hours at your lessons, when you were only one. You said you had done some piece of work yourself, when it was partly done by another. Or you *deceived* a little. You were not quite straightforward. You pretended to be what you were not. I fear there are a great many little foxes of this kind.

A second little fox is a *little theft*. It was only a penny or halfpenny or farthing—only a bit of pencil or a bit of ribbon—only a sweetmeat or a pin. It was only some little unfairness in the class or in the game, that got you a place or credit that did not belong to you.

A third little fox is a *little outburst of temper*. You were provoked, and flew into a passion, and you looked or spoke or acted your anger. You struck your brother or neighbour or friend. Or you were cross, sullen, sulky, and would not do either one thing or another. I heard lately of a boy who used to take turns of this kind, and run away under the sideboard, saying, 'the black dog is on me'.

A fourth little fox is a *little act of disobedience*, refusing to do, or putting off doing, or not doing pleasantly and cheerfully, what a parent asked you to do. You say you must do something else first. You require to be told two or three times. You disregard your mother's word, because she is a widow, or because your father is from home.

A fifth is a *little oath*, or slang expression, or low bad word.

A sixth is a *little act of selfishness*.

A seventh is a *little yielding to indolence, laziness*.

An eighth is a *little breaking of the Sabbath*.

A ninth is a *little omission of prayer*.

A tenth is a *little yielding to envy or jealousy*.

I might mention many more, but these may serve to show what I mean—things that are wrong, but that do not seem very important: not *great sins*, but *little ones*, if any can be called so.

II. **The Harm the Little Foxes do.**—'If they are so *little*, what great wrong can there be in them? Why make so much ado about them? Why not just let them alone? Is it worth while to trouble ourselves or other people in connection with them?' There are three things to be said about them.

1. *Little sins are real sins.*—A little fox is a real fox. A little tiger is a real tiger. A little serpent is a real serpent. The *smallness* of it does not alter its nature. You would never think of saying, 'that is not a tiger, it is only a tiger's cub'; or, 'that is not a serpent, it is only a little serpent'; 'that is not a

fox, it is only a little fox'. The little one is as really a fox as the big one. It has the same nature. It is the same kind of animal. And so a little sin is *sin*, as much as a great one. A little lie is a real lie. A little theft, however trifling it may be, is a real theft. And if *sin* is bad at all, then a *little sin* is necessarily bad. It breaks God's law. It displeases God. It deserves hell. A *little sin* is a *real sin*. Remember that.

2. *Little sins are apt to be little thought of.*—That is one great part of their danger. You say 'it is *only a little fault*. Who would think anything of that?' It is only a little fox, what harm can it do?' If you steal a penny, it is not much, it is not like stealing a pound. If you have played truant at school for an hour, it does not matter much, it is not like staying from school for a day or a week. If you speak some untruthful or unbecoming word, it is only *in joke*. You mean no ill by it. The little sin does not ruffle your conscience, or make you unhappy, or make other people think much the worse of you for it. That is the worst of the whole case. That is one of the strongest reasons why you should be afraid of it.

3. *Little sins prepare the way for big ones, and form habits of sin.*—I never heard of a boy becoming a drunkard, or a thief, or a swearer, or a liar, or a profligate, or a criminal, *all at once*. It was gradually, by little and little, that he became such. It was first one *little sin*, and then another, and another, and at length the way was opened for the big ones. The little lie paves the way for the big one, and the little theft for the big one, and the little fault or evil of any kind for the great one.

A few weeks ago, I went with some friends for a country drive. We passed through a quiet farm steading. Everything was delightfully *country-like*. The dog was rolling on the grass, the hens were feeding, the ducks swimming in the pond, the cows getting home to the byre. In fifteen minutes more the whole stackyard was in a blaze. I fancy it may have been some thoughtless boy, playing with a lucifer match and lighting a straw, which kindled another and another, till from a spark which one might have crushed between his fingers or have trampled out in a moment, one stack of corn after another was consumed, and hundreds of pounds were lost.

The little things lead to and prepare the way for the bigger things. An old writer on this text compares this to what thieves sometimes do, when they go to rob a house. The men are too big to get in, so they let in the boys—get them through the barred windows, or let them down the chimney, and then they open the door to the big men, and the house is robbed.

Now these little sins answer to all the descriptions I have been giving. It is the *little* thing that prepares for the greater, either in the way of good or evil. If some one wanted to teach you any bad habit, he would begin by *littles*, and *he could do it*. He

could make you *drunkards*, by giving you little drops of wine or other drink. He could make you *thieves*, by accustoming you to little acts of dishonesty and pilfering, getting you to take pence and half-pence, and things of no value. He could make you *liars*, by getting you to tell little untruths, and then leading you on to greater. He could lead you into *any vice*, just by getting you accustomed to the *beginnings* of it. Let him get you to commit the *little sins*, and you will soon be ready for the *big ones*. I could tell you the history of many a promising boy, well educated, clever, with every chance of getting on in the world, but he began to tamper with the 'little foxes,' thinking they could not do much harm: he began to give way to little sins, and they led to worse, and were his ruin. I am not so much afraid of the big sins. They may almost be left to themselves. They are so ugly, one would be almost sure to keep them at arm's length. None of you would ever think of being a murderer, or a forger, or a gambler, or a burglar, or a sot. You say at once, 'I never could be anything like that! Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' I do not believe one of you could be tempted just now by what are called the *big sins*. But there is not one of you for whom I would not fear are in danger from the *little ones*.

What harm can the little foxes do? They '*spoil the vines*'. That is what the little sins do. They spoil the *conscience*. They take off the fine edge from it. They drug it. They silence it—make it such that it ceases to warn any longer; and when the conscience is 'spoiled,' one is ready for anything. They spoil the *heart*. They blunt all its finer feelings. They take away its sensibility. They wither it up. They harden it. And when one's heart is spoiled, alas for him! They spoil the *life*. They rob it of its strength and beauty. They derange all the springs of it. It is like the rough handling of a moth or butterfly, or of a bunch of grapes—it destroys the bloom and beauty which can never be restored. I cannot tell all the harm done by the little sins.

And besides being evil in themselves, they tell of an evil state of things. We speak of a straw or a feather being enough to show the way the wind is blowing. And so it may be said of a little sin, that it shows how the heart is inclined. You may learn, and others may learn, from your little sins, about the health of your souls. Just as the doctor looks at

your tongue or feels your pulse, and gathers from that what the state of your bodily health is, so your little sins tell the state of your spiritual health.

All that has been said applies especially to young people. The blossom of spring is easily injured. The newly formed fruit is easily hurt. And 'our vines have tender grapes'. It is spring-time with them. A mother was one day walking with her boys, when a humble man who was passing, said, 'they are *bonnie bairns*'. 'Ah, but,' said the mother, 'we don't know how they may turn out, what they may come to.' 'Well,' said the man, 'but they are *bonnie blossoms*.' That is often all that can be said of them. When the trees are white with blossom in spring, are you not sorry when a storm comes on, or a frost sets in, and blights what was so beautiful? And so when our dear children, who promised so well, who were so anxious and earnest, so deeply impressed, so desirous to be Christians, so near the kingdom of heaven, begin to meddle with and yield to 'little sins,' and the vines with the tender grapes are spoiled, what a bitter disappointment it is! Let us catch the foxes while they are little, and not wait till they are old and big.

Foxes often feign themselves asleep or dead. The Arctic foxes do this; and then, when the birds come, they start up and seize them and devour them. Let us not be too easily persuaded that the foxes are *dead*. And when they are once caught, let us make sure that we do not let them loose again. Mr. White of the British Museum, in his *Heads and Tails*, tells of a fox that had been trapped and had got his leg broken, having it set by a fox-hunting surgeon. The fox recovered and was soon at large, and had a whole pack of hounds following in his track! Let us not treat our 'little foxes' so.

I said we might hear the voice of Jesus in our text, saying, 'Take us the foxes'. He says, 'Take them for us'. We are to take them for Him. We are to take them to Him. None can destroy them—none can kill them but He. Let us take them to Him, and He will do what we cannot. He will wash our sins away in His precious blood; and then He will break the power of them, and deliver us from them. He will give us new hearts and fill them with His love. He will give us supplies of grace. He will dwell in us. He does not send us on this work alone. He goes with us. He works with us, and for us, and in us, by His Holy Spirit.—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 147.

# ISAIAH

## THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL

'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse.'—SOLOMON'S SONG  
IV. 12; V. 1; VI. 2.

'My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.'—  
ISAIAH V. 1-7.

'Ye are God's husbandry.'—I CORINTHIANS III. 9.

SOLOMON likens the soul to a garden, Isaiah to a vineyard, and Paul to a cultivated field. Adam and the earth were blessed together, and afterwards cursed at the same time, from the same cause, and in a similar way. There is thus a deep foundation for this image, which runs through the whole Bible. As man's two gardens—the one within and the other around him—have had the same fate, they illustrate each other in countless ways. Your soul is, or should be, the Beloved's vineyard, God's fruitful field, God's garden and your own. The history of this garden of gardens falls into four chapters:—

I. The common ground.

II. The ground cultivated, or the garden.

III. The garden neglected.

IV. The garden well-kept.

**I. The Common Ground.**—That beautiful garden was once a bit of heath or moorland, over which the beasts ranged. In its natural state it was worthless. About one hundred years ago the finest garden in the world was the palace-garden of Versailles. But when the French king chose the spot it was a marshy moor. It cost twenty-five years of toil and forty millions of money to change it into the royal garden. And every garden was a waste till the busy hand of cultivation clothed it with various beauties. And are not greater wonders wrought in the soul reclaimed from the out-field of the world? Here is a piece of common earth, full of thorns and weeds. But show it favour, fence it off, break up and clean the soil, scatter good seeds in it, let the genial sun warm it by day, and the kindly dews of heaven fall upon it by night; and soon all the colours of the rainbow will spring out of its clods, and the passer-by, seeing the gay and fruitful garden, may well exclaim, 'Lo! what hath man wrought!' And here is a rude sinner, whose soul was overrun with the rank weeds of hell; but the hard soil was broken up, and the good seed was sown in it. The Sun of righteousness darted His quickening beams upon it, and now a rich and fragrant garden gives joy to the angels and to the God of the angels. When we think of such a life as Bunyan's or John Newton's, we catch ourselves saying, 'What hath God wrought?'

**II. The Ground Cultivated, or the Garden.**—*It must first be enclosed.* 'A garden enclosed is my

spouse,' says Solomon. Of every Christian soul we may say, as Satan said of Job, 'Thou hast made a hedge about him'. No country had more gardens than ancient Palestine; and every garden there was fenced either by a wall—as was Gethsemane—or by a prickly hedge. To separate the chosen plot from the open field, and shield it from harm, was always the gardener's first care.

We are a garden walled around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground,  
A little spot enclosed by grace,  
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

*The soil must next be broken up.* What hard and rough work is the digging, the trenching, and the uprooting! The deep ploughshare must be driven right across the fallow ground, making many a deep gash in its bosom. It leaves a scene of ruin and confusion. And when youth has been spent without God, when the soul has long lain fallow, conversion is often attended with many wrenchings and overturnings. But as the confusion in our gardens in spring does not discourage us, so we should not be discouraged by those sorrows that belong to the cultivation of the soul.

*Then without wise sowing all the gardener's pains would be lost.* One of his chief cares is to stock his garden with the best seeds. By the hand of parents, pastors, and teachers God is always sowing His good seed in your heart. But both for this world and the next youth is the sowing-time. Skillful sowers rise early, and cast the seed into the soil wetted by the dews of night, ere the mid-day sun has parched the clod. And so, in the morning of life, while drenched with the heavenly dew, open your heart to receive the precious seed. Fill mind and memory with the delightful truths of the Bible, and let them sink deep that, seed-like, they may swell, and sprout, and bring forth fruits and flowers of choicest perfume and colour. And you must be ever tending them, for to let your garden alone is to spoil all. Coleridge, the philosopher, was once visited by Thelwall, a sceptic. Thelwall maintained that children should not be taught religion: it was interfering with their freedom, and filling their minds with prejudices; they should be allowed to grow up naturally, and then choose for themselves. The two sauntered into his garden. Coleridge loved his books more than his plants, and his garden was a mass of weeds; but Thelwall was fond of gardening. 'I wonder,' said he, 'Mr. Coleridge, that your garden is in such a state. Why don't you weed it and plant flowers?' 'Oh,' replied Coleridge with a smile, 'I



want my garden to grow naturally. I won't fill it with prejudices.' Your soul resembles your garden in this, that evil seeds lurk within, and good seeds must be planted in their place. To let it alone is to give it over to utter waste. Near some farmhouses there used to be a corner called 'the devil's neuk'. The superstitious idea was that by giving one spot over to the evil one, he would be propitiated, and would not injure the rest of the farm. The 'neuk' was simply left to itself, and thus became a wilderness at the corner of a beautiful field. Any human heart, if left without Christian training, might soon be overrun with all the foul growths of evil.

*The gardener's utmost art would be in vain without the sunshine, the shower, and the quickening breath of spring.* The hope of any garden lies not within its walls, but in the overshadowing heaven that pours its bounties down. That philosopher, famed for his contentment, was right, who, when asked by a friend to show him the splendid garden of which he was always boasting, led him into a bare, rocky space behind his house. 'Where is your garden?' the friend asked. 'Look up,' said the philosopher, 'heaven is a part of my garden.' Every good gift in the garden really comes from above; for should God command the clouds to rain no rain, the earth would soon be as iron. Heaven shields, broods over, and enriches every fruitful sod. It is a great truth that Paul planteth and Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase. Turn, then, your whole being fairly towards the sunshine of God's grace, and pray that the garden of your soul may always be as ready to receive heavenly blessing as is the garden around your dwelling.

One famed spot in Norway is called Gudvangen, that is, God's garden or field. It is a little patch of life and fertility in a district which ruin has claimed for its own, and it is enclosed with awful rocks which seem to fill earth and reach to the skies. And in earth's most wicked corners we have found a soul gladly given up to the Heavenly Husbandman. Lo, it was God's garden, a living miracle of grace amid moral desolations. As Mungo Park, when about to perish in the African desert, was revived by the sight of a tuft of green moss, so the meanest flower on the roadside may give you bright and helpful suggestions of the love of your Heavenly Father.

From gazing on the tender flower,  
We lift our eyes to Him whose power  
Hath all its beauty given;  
Who, in this atmosphere of death,  
Hath given it life, and form, and breath,  
And brilliant hues of heaven.

**III. The Garden Neglected.**—Every child of Adam, like Adam in Eden, has a garden to keep and dress, of which God is the Owner and he the tenant. The keeping of this garden is the chief work of the beggar and the king. But there are many spiritual sluggards whose garden is a shameful ruin, and, saddest of all, some of them once had their garden well kept. A neglected garden is one of the

completest pictures of desolation in the world; it is desolation's throne in the deserted village. The flowers have sunk into the earth, and the weeds in that richer soil are ranker than in the neighbouring wood or common. The briars and nettles overtop the dyke, and shelter foul things, dead and living. And you cannot help contrasting what it now is with what it was and what it should be. Once an oasis in the desert, now it is a desert in the oasis. The scene is judgment-like. That deserted highland garden is an emblem of the backslider's soul; for the worst of curses is a blessing abused, and they are the most sinful who sin against the clearest light.

**IV. The Garden Well-kept.**—Solomon gives a picture of what your soul should be, and Isaiah of what it should not be. Everything had been done for the Beloved's vineyard, and in return He received only wild grapes (Isa. v.). But the garden in the song was stocked with all rich and beautiful things. It gave pleasure to every sense: its fine forms and colours gladdened the eye, its ripe fruits gratified the palate, its exquisite perfumes gave delight, and its leaves yielded an additional joy by their agreeable shade. A holy soul is compared to such a garden. It is the most beautiful thing in the world, a paradise of heaven on earth. We may say that good deeds are the fruits, and gracious feelings the flowers, in this garden of God. What an idea a well-kept garden gives us of God's bounty! And can you believe that He does not desire at least an equal abundance and beauty in His garden of the soul? For we know that He delights in His garden, and often visits it, and calls it His own, and His inheritance. But this is a thought above mortal mind. This at least is certain, that by grace you may do those things that are well pleasing to God. Your offerings may be as an odour of a sweet smell, like rich flowers from which perfume flows through every pore. And surely the soul of a young disciple is specially pleasing to God. It is so far like the garden of Eden, for it has not been wasted or profaned with the thorns and thistles of habitual sinfulness.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 239.

#### GRAPES AND WILD GRAPES

'My Well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.'—ISAIAH V. 1, 2.

In this parable of Isaiah, it says that the Lord of the vineyard fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine. I have in my mind one vineyard at this time, which I will tell you of, because it will help you to understand the whole matter. This vineyard is one of the best in Europe. It stands on the sloping side of the Rhine, facing the southern sun, and is called the *Côte Rôtie*, that is, the Roasted Side, because that sun has such great power, darting down all its rays upon the place.

I dare say you think that very choice vines grow in a very good rich soil? No: never. They grow in a very poor sandy soil, where nothing else but weeds will grow. And to prevent the roots from striking deeply down, and trying to find better earth, the vine-dressers put tiles underneath them, so that they can only run down a little way.

I. Now, if you are compared to God's vineyard, what kind of ground, so to speak, are your hearts? Are they good by nature? Are they apt to bear much fruit? You know better: how, of themselves, they are quite barren: how they can neither do nor think anything that is good. Is not, then, this like the bad ground of the vineyard? And just as when the roots of the vines seem to be going too far into the earth, the wise husbandman puts something under them that prevents them striking downward: so when any of God's servants are growing too fond of this world, what does He do? He sends them something which takes away all their pleasure in it.

II. But what makes these vineyards so choice? Because they get so much of the heat of the sun. The ground is never cool. By day the earth is like an oven, and even by night it has not time to lose its heat. Therefore the precious juice of the vine *works*, as they say, by day and night, ripening, sweetening, being perfected, always.

And what is it that makes Christians what they are? Is it not the Sun of Righteousness, their dear Lord? The more He shines on them, the more they look to Him, are they not the better? Do they not bring forth more fruit?

Again, something else. Perhaps you think that these vineyards are beautiful to look at. Not at all. The vines are like poor, stunted gooseberry bushes. Our Lord, you know, calls Himself the True Vine; and yet it is said of Him in Isaiah that He hath neither form nor comeliness (that is, as far as the world judges); and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. The best vines are what those who know nothing of the matter would call the ugliest. Sometimes God's best vines, His dearest children, are just those that we are most ready to pass over too!

III. These vineyards must be fenced. Why? First, to keep out thieves. Every one, going by, stretches out his hand for grapes. Then dogs, when they have once tasted them, devour a great number. So do fowls: hens, and the like. And there are spoilers that no fence can keep out. Lizards, little weak things as they seem, eat up a third part of all the grapes. And are there not many and many evil beings who try to spoil all that a Christian does? If any one of you determine, this once, this day, or week, or month, now to be in earnest, now to serve God better than before, do you not know how many enemies rise up against you?—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 120.

## THE LORD'S VINEYARD

'What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it.'—ISAIAH V. 4.

A fox is a very handsome animal with beautiful fur and a beautiful tail, so it is all the more temptation when we see them coming into the vineyard not to drive them away; it is a great temptation to let them come into the vineyard and take no notice of them until they have done so much harm to the vines that they make them only able to bring forth the wildest and most poisonous grapes, rather than the kind of grapes Jesus expects to see growing in His vineyard. But if you pray to God He will help you, for His dear Son's sake, not to give way to these little foxes, but to drive them away and not let them come into the vineyard. If you ask Him, He will give you 'power and strength to have victory,' and to 'triumph' over them.

I. Well, the first of these 'little foxes that spoil the vines' is *Unprayerfulness*, when we either forget to say our prayers at all or else just say them through, longing to get them over, without thinking of what we say, or thinking all the time about something else. Your friends may tell you to say your prayers, and they may take care you do say them, but they cannot even then make you pray; for even when we say our prayers we don't pray unless we think about what we are saying. To say our prayers through without thinking of what we are saying, is no more praying than if those same words were said by parrots, which can be taught to say words but have no idea of what those words mean.

I will tell you a story showing how difficult it is to really pray, even when we say our prayers, and I want you to ask God to help you to pray better than the man I am going to tell you about.

This is the story.

Long ago there lived a holy man called St. Bernard, and he was once travelling over some mountains in Switzerland, called the Alps, when a robber came to him and told him to give him his horse, so St. Bernard promised to give his horse to the robber if the robber would first do something for him. The robber asked what it was, and St. Bernard told him to say the Lord's Prayer through without thinking of anything else while he said it. The robber thought that was a very easy thing to do, and began to say the Lord's Prayer; but he was not able even to say that one short prayer to the end without thinking of other things while he said it, for he stopped in the middle of it and asked St. Bernard if he would give him the harness as well as the horse.

So you see *Unprayerfulness* is the name of one of 'the little foxes that spoil the vines,' and you must ask God to help you to overcome this little fox, or you will not be able to overcome any of the others, for none of the others can be overcome until *Unprayerfulness* has first of all been overcome. It is only by prayer that God will give us strength to overcome the others. We cannot overcome them in

our own strength, but 'We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us'.

II. Then another of 'the little foxes that spoil the vines' is called *Disobedience*, and *Disobediencence* comes at once from Unprayerfulness. For if we find it difficult to be obedient, we shall never learn to obey cheerfully, promptly, and lovingly, as Jesus obeyed, unless we keep on praying to God to help us, for Jesus' sake, to be obedient.

III. The name of another of these little foxes is *Sulky Temper*, and this one, like *Disobedience*, can only be overcome by prayer to God for strength to overcome it. We shall never be like the child Jesus, until we have overcome Sulky Temper.

IV. We will think of one more little fox, whose name is *Untruthfulness*. This is one of the most mischievous of them all, and does a great deal of harm to the vines, worse harm than even *Disobedience* and *Sulky Temper* can do, and like them, it can only be overcome by prayer.

Unless we pray to God, and go on praying to Him, to help us, the vines cannot by any possible means bear the grapes Jesus looks for, but only the wildest and most poisonous grapes; but if we go on praying to God, He will help us to conquer our sins; and it will help you to conquer *Untruthfulness*, if, when you are tempted to give way to it, you think of what those words mean I have told you before—'Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips'. If you pray to God and persevere, you will be able to conquer *Untruthfulness*.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 67.

#### IN THE TEMPLE

'Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me.'—ISAIAH VI, 8, 9.

I. What *Isaiah Saw*.—He says that he saw the Lord sitting on a throne. The King Uzziah was dead, but the eternal King never dies. He was on His throne, high and lifted up, and the glory of His garments filled the Temple, so great and glorious was He. And then *Isaiah* heard angels singing, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory'.

If you went into a great picture gallery you would probably come to one room which would be called the 'Rubens room,' where all the pictures would be by Rubens; then in another part of the gallery you would come to the 'Turner room,' and all the pictures in that would be Turner's, the great English painter; and so on through room after room. And if you went into a library, on one shelf you would find the works of Shakespeare, on another the works of Bacon, on another the works of Milton. But with regard to God, the angels say you may go up and down the world, and everywhere you go you will find every room, every shelf, filled with the glory of the same One. The *whole earth* is filled with the glory of One, and that one is God. Now, why does God say that to *Isaiah*? In order to teach *Isaiah reverence*;

to teach him to fear God—not to be afraid, but to teach him to honour God. Uzziah had  *dared* God, as it were. Uzziah had forgotten the greatness of God, and so the first thing God did with the boy was to stamp upon his mind that he must be reverent.

II. What *Isaiah Felt*.—The first thing he felt was that, in the midst of all that glory, he himself was unclean—he felt that he had sinned, he had done wrong. He knew that Uzziah had done wrong; and God taught him that, young as he was, *he too* had sinned, and so he cried out, 'Woe is me, I am unclean'. He felt that he had sinned, and then lest his heart should be broken with sorrow God made him feel that He, the God against whom he had sinned, could pardon and cleanse him. Now, we shall never get to be anything much in this life until we feel that we have sinned. I don't know whether you boys and girls get any good from these services, but I am sure you get no good at all unless it comes home to you that *you too* have done wrong. It is a grand moment when you find fault with yourselves. That is the finest thing a boy can do, to stand up and, as it were, pitch right into himself, find fault with himself, feeling that he has done wrong. Have you felt that—felt that you too have sinned? But if you have sinned it isn't hopeless, for God can take your sin away. Ask Him for pardon, ask Him for power not to sin.

III. What *Isaiah Heard*.—He heard God asking for somebody to carry a message for Him and do work for Him. 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' Well, but you say, 'We never heard God say that'. No, you never heard Him in so many words, but if you know how to listen for God's call, you can hear Him calling every day. How does God call? *God calls by putting a need before you*. When anything wants doing that is God's call to somebody. You know people beg in many ways. Some come up to you and whine and talk, and keep you a long time describing their poverty. But I saw a little boy in Finsbury Park the other day, who begged in a most wonderful way. He did not utter a single word. It was a bleak cold day—and there he was, badly clothed, and he looked very pale and very sad; his cheeks were pinched with hunger, his lips blue with the cold; he looked at me—he didn't say a word, but oh, how he begged! Dear me, how that child begged! God was shouting—shouting aloud for somebody to help that boy. He didn't say a word, but he begged all the same. And so, whenever we see things that want doing, we may be sure that we are listening to God's call; God is saying, 'Who will go and do this for me?'

IV. What *Isaiah Said*.—'Here am I: send me.' 'Here am I.' He didn't look about and say, 'Who is there that will go?' No; he said, 'Here am I, send me,' and God did not refuse him.

You know that in arranging their play the bigger boys choose who shall be on their side, and they always choose the best boys; the poor little fellows who can't play well are left for the other side. They



are always so anxious to be called; but are always passed by, or left to the very last. God doesn't do that; He doesn't say, 'Oh no, no, I want somebody else'. He says, '*Come, Whosoever will let him come*'. And now, do you, whenever God calls you—whenever you see a thing needing to be done, and you can do it—hold out your hand and say, 'Here am I, send me,' and God will send you, and help you, and bless you to the end.—J. MORGAN GIBBON, *In the Days of Truth*, p. 39.

## THE JOY OF HARVEST

(For Harvest Festival)

'They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest.'—ISAIAH IX. 3.

Why glad to-day? Flowers, fruit, decorations. Cf. Jews at their Feast of Tabernacles [Deut. xvi. 13-15; cf. Rev. vii. 9, 10] called '*The Feast of the Jews*' because so much the most joyful. Such joy 'the joy of harvest'. See:—

I. What the Joy is.—Natural to be glad of a good harvest. Why? Because an *end* is gained for which there has been long waiting, labour, anxiety.

[*Illustration*.—Remember when you started to win that prize! So many marks to be gained, some few each Sunday. You were ill, perhaps, and missed some for attendance. Often you were all but late—it took a good deal of exertion and some self-denial to get you to school in time—then the lessons, etc.; but, little by little, the marks added up, and at last you found you had right number. The prize yours, and you glad—'rejoiced according to the joy of harvest'.]

So with farmer—getting soil ready—ploughing, then sowing, etc. How often the weather seemed to backen the crops! What care required to watch and guard them! What fears that, in spite of all, some misfortune would prevent the gaining of the prize. Now at last the harvest is come. Natural to be joyful.

II. Why should we Rejoice?—Natural for farmers, but we have not had much anxiety! Why should we be joyful? Well,

### 1. From sympathy.

Cf. St. Paul. 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' Easy and natural to do this. If we don't get a prize ourselves we yet feel some gladness to see some one else glad—anyway we *ought* to! [Sometimes children say, 'No prize—won't come to prize-giving'. Is not that rather selfish? They lose by it too, for joy is joy, whether we rejoice with others or for ourselves. Silly to lose 'a good time' by sulking!]

### 2. From gratitude.

If not had the anxiety, yet share the benefit. Food cheaper. Money will go farther. Parents better able to get you clothes, etc. A good harvest does us all good, and if we have not had the trouble all the more should we be grateful for an unearned blessing.

III. Other Joys like Harvest Joys.—E.g. the harvest of a successful life. It is reached little by little, step by step, no leaping to results. Just like

'first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn'. When it comes, what a satisfaction! What a reward for patient painstaking! Five, ten, fifteen years hence, who of us will be reaping?—and what?

And another life beyond this; other harvests in the world to come—still reached little by little—little acts of kindness—little self-denials, etc. Yet what rejoicing when Christ's true servants rejoice before Him 'according to the joy in harvest' [cf. Rev. vii. 9, 10].

*Conclusion*.—Harvests are not *always* joyful. [*Illustration*]. The farmer cannot always secure a good harvest. But *we* may, for God will help us; own fault if our harvest be not glad. Remember, 'as a man soweth so shall he also reap' [cf. also Gal. vi. 8]. Now is *our* sowing time: are we sowing good seed or bad?—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 72.

## WONDERFUL NAME

'And His name shall be called wonderful.'—ISAIAH IX. 6.

OLD Testament names are full of meaning, and generally express some feature of the character, life, or service of the persons who bear them. There is a name which is above every name, and that one is *Jesus*; but there is another very precious name of *His*, and that is *Wonderful*. He has—

1. A Wonderful eye to see us—His Sympathy.
2. A Wonderful ear to hear us—His Solitude.
3. A Wonderful heart to love us—His Salvation.
4. A Wonderful hand to hold us—His Strength.
5. A Wonderful word to cheer us—His Support.
6. A Wonderful spirit to guide us—His Spirit.
7. A Wonderful home to receive us—His Satisfaction.

I witnessed something most interesting many years ago in the Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester. A little dog was lying very comfortably in the lions' den, and they took no notice of it. The visitors were indeed surprised, and there were numerous inquiries for an explanation. The story was a very touching one. The keeper said that some little time before our visit a man came into the gardens with a dog. It vexed him in some way: so to get rid of it, as he thought, he threw it into the lions' den; but to everybody's surprise the lions did not touch the dog. After awhile the man's temper cooled down, and he went to the keeper and asked for his dog. 'Well,' said the keeper, 'go in and fetch it out!' But the man dared not do that. The dog was in perfect safety now. So all who put their trust in Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, are perfectly safe, and none shall be able to pluck them from His hand. It is indeed a wonderful hand to hold us!—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 100.

## POWER GIVEN TO CHILDREN TO SERVE CHRIST

'A little child shall lead them.'—ISAIAH XI. 6.

By little things great deeds can be done. It was the children who cried Hosanna. That was a little thing

in itself. But it was Hosanna to Jesus, and great because He is great, and as long as the world lasts it will be told.

To show what even one voice could do, I will tell you of a German musician who, many years ago, left his native land for America.

Arrived in New York he could not speak English, but he had a great hunger for music, and one Lord's Day, passing a place of worship, he went in to enjoy the praise.

Now this was a church where very little attention was given to music; every one sang in his own way, and the singing was to his ear so unskilful and even rude that it nearly drove him out of the place; but just then his quick ear, in the midst of all the harsh discordant sounds, heard a young female voice, sweet and clear, but not loud, singing in perfect tune, and gradually, one after another, all the congregation caught the tune from her, and followed till the discord ceased, and the whole congregation were singing in perfect harmony.

Another instance of power given to children to serve Christ is told of a very rich Count of Silesia. It is said that somehow he hated Christ and hated the Bible and hated the Church. It is said, indeed, that he made a mock of God and heaven and eternity. Now this rich and evil man had churches on his estate, and, strange to say, he had to appoint the ministers to those churches. And at the time I am telling of he had to appoint one to a church near his own castle. And so bad and unfaithful a man was he that he appointed a man who also hated God and the Bible, and made a mock of heaven and eternity.

And the two men would sit at the Count's table scoffing at all holy things. And at the church there was no one to teach the people about Christ.

Now on the Count's estate at that time lived a pious Christian schoolmaster. And when everything in the place was against Christ, he and his household were thinking more of Him and clinging closer to Him. In the evenings passers-by heard hymns of Jesus sung in his house, sweetly sung, in which his children joined.

One evening, as the Count was passing this house, he heard a child singing in the garden. She was alone, and her voice was so sweet that the Count stopped to listen. As he listened he found it was a hymn to Christ the child was singing. Then the singing stopped, and the Count, looking over the hedge, saw that though she was smiling she was in tears. Then he asked why she was crying, and she said, 'I am crying for joy'.

'Joy! for what?' said the Count.

'For Christ's love,' she quickly replied.

The Count said, 'But Christ is dead'.

'No,' said the little girl, 'He is not dead. He died, but He rose from the dead, and He is alive again, and lives for evermore, to send blessings and to save.'

The child seemed so sure, so bright, and so glad, that her words fixed themselves in the Count's mind. Silent and thoughtful he went on his way.

A week after business called him to take a journey to the borders of Austria, to a village *gnaden-frey*, where was a Moravian settlement. The chapel bells were ringing, and inquiring why, he was told it was the *children's festival*. For the sake of hearing the children's singing he turned into the chapel. The preacher gave out for the text, 'Have ye never heard, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?' Remembering the little voice he had heard in his own village, the hard heart of the Count was touched. His wicked pride was brought low, and, as he told afterwards, he found himself shedding tears.

The children had called on him to follow Christ, and the children had won him to obey. He could no longer scoff; he could no longer withhold his heart from his Lord. The words of Paul came to his lips. In sorrow, in sincerity, and joy, he cried, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' He found himself at the feet of Christ. And now the Count of Silesia joins with the schoolmaster's family in his village, is a loyal soldier in Christ's army, and marches under His banner. It was a child that began the first change, and Jesus was glad. And it is true now, and here, and everywhere, and always, that a little child can lead a man to Jesus. The greatest things are often done by little means.

One gentle word that I may speak,

Or one kind, loving deed

By me, a child both small and weak,

May produce a tiny seed;

And who can tell what good may spring

From such a very little thing?

Perhaps it would fix this lesson better in your minds if I told you a story about a Norwegian fisher girl, who once in her life did *not* do all she could. She lived in a cottage by the sea, and she had no mother.

Her father one day, going out to fish, said to her: 'When night comes on, light the lamp and put it in the window as mother did, and when the darkness falls I'll see where to land'.

The little girl—she was very little and all alone—fell fast asleep as night came on, and so the lamp was not lit, and that night her father, not seeing any light, came ashore at the wrong place and was drowned. But the poor child could never forgive herself, and she said, 'All my life long I will keep the lamp burning for others'. And she lived in that cottage till she was an old woman. She sat up spinning all night and slept by day.

Many a sailor's life she saved.

By failing once she learned for evermore to do what she could.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 53.

#### CHILD-LEADING

'And a little child shall lead them.'—ISAIAH XI. 6.

THESE words, when looked at in connection with the passage in which they occur, suggest this thought—the power for good of a little child.

1. We may Apply Them to the Child Jesus.—

How wonderful it is to think of the Son of God and the Son of Man—the King of angels and the Saviour of the world—as being a little Child! Yet so He was. But He was a great power even when He lay in the manger-cradle, and while He sojourned—an unconscious Babe—in Bethlehem.

**II. We may Apply these Words to All Children, and especially to Good Children.**—What a stir the presence even of one little child makes in a house! When a babe is born, its appearance at once influences all the family arrangements, and its own interests require to be constantly consulted. There the little thing is, lying in its mother's arms, very tiny and feeble, yet great even in its smallness, and strong because of its weakness. The mother is fully occupied with it; the father, even when at business, cannot long forget it. The elder children combine to protect and cherish it. That gentle presence warms and softens all hearts within the household.

Only a tender flower  
Sent us to rear;  
Only a life to love  
While we are here;  
Only a baby small,  
Never at rest;  
Small, but how dear to us  
God knoweth best.

Of father and mother and brothers and sisters and friends, we may say that 'the little child leads them'.

**III. We may Apply these Words to All People who have the Child-Spirit.**—Childlikeness is the symbol of spiritual excellence and power. The Lord Jesus once set this truth very impressively before His disciples by means of an object lesson. They had been contending who should be the greatest, and had asked their Master about it. And how did He answer their ugly and troublesome question? He looked about in the house, or on the wayside, for a very little boy. He called one to Him, and the little fellow came, open-eyed and wondering. Jesus set him in the midst of the tall, bearded disciples, and told them that, if they would be great, they must become like *him*. He also took the child up in His arms, as if to show that true greatness meant loving nearness to His own heart of love. The little child was to lead the great Apostles up to their supereminent thrones. They must be humble and docile, like him, if they would receive the tongue of fire and the power of the keys.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 1.

### BREAKING THE SPELL

'The great trumpet shall be blown.'—ISAIAH XXVII. 13.

MOST of you have read, I dare say, the fine story of the Sleeping Beauty and the Enchanted Palace. It is long since I read it, but it is one of those stories that, once read, can never again be altogether forgotten. There was the great palace, with its far-stretching garden and its thick, shaggy woods; with its soldiers and serving-men, the little page-boys and the ladies-in-waiting. But it was all like a picture:

nothing was moving; the same watchman had stood on the tower through frost and heat, as if he were a statue; the sentinel had leaned on his spear at the great gateway night and day through winter and summer, as if he had been carved out of stone; and there, in the heart of the palace, the beautiful princess and her maidens had slept and slept, while the dust of the years was falling everywhere; it was all like the grounds and the palace of a dream!

You know why a wicked Enchanter had thrown a spell over all, and no one could lift hand or foot, or see or speak, until that spell was broken. But it could be broken if some one with faith and courage would do it. You remember how? Outside, on a tree of the enchanted wood where no fruit grew, a horn or trumpet was hung up, and beside it was a sword. Whoever would break the magic spell and awaken the sleepers, and bring all the stir and songfulness of life into that palace and these grounds again, must dare to enter the darkness of the wood, draw that sword from its scabbard, and blow a clear, loud, ringing blast on the trumpet.

And so it proved to be. A brave young knight, who had given his life for God and for all that was good, groped his way through the wood, and, in spite of all the sounds and sights that threatened him, he made his way to the tree, and drew the sword, and blew the trumpet—and then there was such a stir! The stream began to flow, the gates swung back, everybody in the palace began to move, the princess and her maidens awoke, and all the brightness and the music of life were restored.

That is a nice story, is it not? It is, and it is something more than a story; it is a parable: it only puts some big, big truths in a nice and pleasing way. For they are not palaces and gardens only that have had the spell of enchantment cast on them: whole nations have had it, and some have been under its power for hundreds and hundreds of years. They have made no progress in that time: they have had no life in them; what they were hundreds of years ago they still continued to be. The Enchanter that bound them was Superstition. But bold knights came—knights of the Cross—from the days of William Carey and John Williams, and they drew the sword, which is the Word of God, and with the breath of faith they blew the trumpet of the Gospel, and the heathen world that had long been slumbering began to awake into new life.

Oh, the great changes that have taken place within a few years, since first the knights of the Cross began to enter the darkness of heathenism! Within the memory of living men, lands that are larger than our own, and that were sunk in the deep sleep of idolatry, have cast their idols to the ground, and to-day they are as Christian as we are. Within the memory of living men, Africa was like a gloomy forest, but David Livingstone dared to enter it, and with only God's Word for a sword, but with the breath of faith with which to sound the Gospel message, he brought light and life to the Dark Continent, and now, point



after point and place after place, Christian Missions are spreading all over it.

Ah! that is a fine story about the Enchanted Palace and the Sleeping Princess; but it is a still finer story that is being worked out to-day in every part of the world. For the knights of the Cross are going everywhere, and everywhere the stir of a new life is going with them. When we think of what has been done in a hundred years, and then think of our steamships, and trains, and telegraphs, and printing-press, there is, I think, little need to wonder that before fifty years have fled the knowledge of Jesus the Redeemer will be brought to the whole world.

You must help; you can help. Faith first; you can pray. Pray, then, and put your heart into your prayer that Christ's kingdom may come, and that the heathen may speedily be given Him for an inheritance. Your faith, going with your prayers, will be like the very breath of life to awake the slumbering. But there is the sword, too—the Word of God; make use of that. You have your missionary boxes—do not neglect them; they are the scabbard of the sword the missionaries have to use. Be knights of the Cross to help God's work where you are and as you are; it may be that some of you will yet yourselves go to the foreign field and be the Lord's knights there. May He grant that it shall be so! When the great victory comes—as come it must—when Christ shall be crowned King over all, look to it that this may then be your reward—that you did not hold back, but rather did what you could and as you could, to help forward the merciful work of the Lord.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 42.

### THE LIVING STONE

ISAIAH XXVIII. 16, 17.

1. The Selected Stone.—To save us (1 Peter ii. 4).
2. The Foundation Stone.—To bear us (1 Cor. iii. 11).
3. The Tried Stone.—To hold us (1 Peter ii. 6).
4. The Corner Stone.—To unite us (Eph. ii. 20).
5. The Sure Stone.—To keep us (1 Peter ii. 5).
6. The Testing Stone.—To try us (1 Peter ii. 8).
7. The Lasting Stone.—To satisfy us (1 Peter ii. 7).—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 114.

### THE FITCHES, THE CUMMIN, AND THE WHEAT

'Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.'—ISAIAH XXVIII. 24-28.

I SHOULD not wonder if you had never noticed these verses before; and now that I have read them to you,

you perhaps think that they are very difficult to understand, and that they are not at all interesting. We shall see presently: but in the first place, notice something else. You know how often it pleased our dear Lord to teach the people by country sights and country business. How He told them to consider the lilies; how He spoke of the grass which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how He told the parable of the Sower, of the Tares, of the Seed that was cast into the ground and sprung and grew up, men knew not how: of the fields that were white already to harvest. And what the Lord did, His disciples learnt from Him to do, as you may see in the Epistles. Here, in the Old Testament, we have an example of the same thing. You remember what St. Mark says: 'After this He appeared in another shape unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country'. And so, in your country walks there are plenty of things which He is ready to teach you, if you will only learn. The crops, the flowers, the rocks, they each have their lesson—they are each a kind of standing parable, if He will only give you eyes to see what its meaning is.

Now what is Isaiah speaking of in these verses? He is telling us of the different ways in which different crops are cultivated; how they are sown at first, how they are brought to the mill at last. And more particularly he tells you of fitches, and cummin, and wheat.

What are fitches? We generally call them vetches; I dare say some of you know the bright little boat-shaped flowers of that name. Here in Sussex we do not cultivate them much: but in many parts of England they do, and so they did in Judea, as food for cattle. Cummin is a plant that is sown on account of its little spiky seed. You know what caraway seeds are, which they put in sugar plums: cummin seeds are not unlike them. A very little seed: inasmuch that you may remember when our Lord was finding fault with the Pharisees for neglecting great things, while they pretended to be so very careful about little matters, He tells them that they tithe mint and anise and cummin, and neglect the weightier matters of the Law.

It begins: 'Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cart abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin?' That is, doth he plough and tear up the earth for the sake of ploughing and tearing it, and, as it were, putting it to pain? No, he doth it for a particular reason; that it may be fit to bear different plants set in it; and when it has been prepared for that, then he leaves it alone; then the plough is drawn away to the little green strip at the end of the field, or to the shed in the farmyard, and there it lies by till the next year. Now what does St. Paul tell us? 'Ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building.' Well, then, what an earthly husbandman does to the ground, God, who is the Heavenly Husbandman, does to us. Our hearts are so cold and hard and careless, that they have to be ploughed up, as it

were, by sorrow; or they never would be fit to bear any fruit. David says, 'Before I was troubled I went wrong; but now have I kept Thy word': there is nothing that all through the Bible is read oftener than this. You have this ploughing as well as every one: you have not the same sorrow, the same affliction, the same grief that grown-up people have; but you have your own little sorrows, which are not little to you. To the holy angels, I dare say, all are easier, and griefs seem alike little; but they care for all, and try to help us through all.

Well, but these same verses tell us that God does not try the weak so much as He does the strong. 'The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.' If we were to put such poor little things as fitches and cummin into the same mill in which we grind corn, we should utterly destroy them. So they are treated in a much gentler way. In order that the fruit may be separated from the husk, they are also beaten, but it is with a staff or rod—not ground between two heavy stones. 'But,'—he goes on—'bread corn is bruised.' Wheat has so much hard trial to go through: but when it has gone through it, how much more valuable it is! Poor little weak things are much less tried, but then they are less worth: the most valuable of all seeds, wheat, is bruised most severely, and thence comes bread, the staff of life.

Now see what Isaiah says in another place. 'In measure, when it shooteth forth, Thou wilt debate with it: He stayeth the rough wind in the days of the east wind.' That is, in early spring, when the young leaves begin to shoot forth, God debates with them, that is, tries them, in measure as they are able to bear: if He allows the east wind, which is the worst and most dangerous wind, then He does not allow it to blow hard; if He sends a rough wind, then it is not an east wind.

And this is the way that God deals with you. While you are young and tender, He shelters you from temptation—He keeps you safe in the fold here. By and by your temptations will become greater; but then you will have more strength. You will first have been confirmed, which is the very sacrament of strength and then you will receive that which one of the prophets calls 'Corn of the Mighty,' namely, the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is strength Himself. This is trying you by measure, giving you strength, before He calls you to use it. If you are poor little fitches, then you need not be afraid that you will be ground in a mill, like stronger things. The Scotch have a very pretty proverb, though it requires to be explained, to the same effect. They say, 'The worst blast of the three borrowing days never hurts the one poor little hogget.' 'The borrowing days' are the three last days of March, which March borrows, as they say, from April: and the lambs of that spring just born, they call *hoggets*. The month of March is the time of the fiercest winds, when the

sleet drives most blindly over the mountains and on the moors, where the sheep pasture: the proverb therefore means that the very worst of all storms is not allowed to hurt the very weakest of all creatures. You know what a helpless creature a very young lamb is—how it seems hardly able to stand on its tall trembling legs—how it looks too heavy for itself, but you do not know what a mountain storm is in Scotland. Well, then, if you are in the one fold, I am sure that the worst blast of temptation will not really be allowed to hurt *our* poor little *hoggets*.

Then you must remember that, though we have no right to wish for temptations, because we know and feel how weak we are, much less to run into them, when our Lord has taught us to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation,' yet, when He does send them, we ought not to be frightened, we ought not to be sorry, we ought rather to rejoice. If He allows them to come, it is in order that we may be able to do Him the more honour by means of them. St. James says, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life'. It is not only that the more we are tried here, the brighter crown we shall have by and by; but the more we are tried here, the happier even here we shall be, because we shall learn more of God's strength, and of God's love and care for us, and how many wonderful ways He has of delivering us, which we should never have thought of.

You know that among the martyrs of Christ St. Ignatius was one of the most famous. In writing one of the Epistles just before his death, he says, 'I am the corn of Christ: I know that I must be ground by the teeth of the lions as in a mill, that I may be presented like fine flour to my Lord'. Could there be a more terrible grinding than that? and yet, do you think that St. Ignatius would, for any joy set before him, have not suffered it?

Now look through the text once more, and you will find five kinds of threshing mentioned: by the staff; by the rod; by the treading out under the feet of oxen or horses; by the threshing instrument—which was also called a drag, a kind of harrow made with bushes and weighted with stones; and the waggon, which not only threshed out the corn, but cut up the straw as fodder for the cattle, for the Jews never used hay. All this means to show us how many ways God has of trying us, from the staff and rod, down to the dreadful way in which bread-corn was bruised. Our dear Lord was tried by all; one after another, all, from the time that He came into this world in the cold winter, and in the poor manger, to the time that He went out of it on Mount Calvary. Neither I nor any one can say what God has in store for you: but this I know, that if, as you grow up, you grow up His true servants, some trials you will have. 'If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards and not sons.' You do not know much about temptations yet; but you must try to keep in your mind that come they must—come they will—so that you may not be taken unawares. If you ever mean to conquer

great ones, you must be in the habit of conquering the little ones you have here. Little temptations: not to speak the exact truth; to be unkind to your companions; to be passionate; to be envious, if you see one of your playmates do something or get something which you cannot do, and have not had given yourself. Above all things, be obedient. Before they send soldiers to fight with the enemy, what do they do to them? They send them out to encamp on commons and hills here at home. They get used to cold and wet and storm and wind, they learn how to manage for themselves in time of peace; and then all these things will not be new to them in time of war. So they have reviews—that is, pretence battles: they are taught how to meet soldiers pretending to be the enemy, that when they come to face a real enemy, they may feel that it is not altogether a strange thing. What is said of our Lord? He went forth conquering and to conquer; and so must you. If you are not conquering as you go on, now, you cannot hope that you will go out to conquer by and by.

Try to think of these things: try to pray over them: and then, when the great fierce temptation really comes, you will be able to say, this I knew that I must expect; then I must not be afraid of it; 'forewarned, forearmed'.

And then, when the wheat has grown up from the earth and has been cut down, and threshed, and separated from the chaff, then the King will say to the reapers, that is the angels, 'Gather the wheat into My barn'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 131.

### FLYING BIRDS

'As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem.'  
—ISAIAH XXXI. 5.

*Object—A picture of a flying bird.*<sup>1</sup>

THE Bible has much to say about birds. It seldom, however, mentions their migratory habits. The above passage from Isaiah is perhaps the clearest in this reference to migration. (Ask for a definition of the word 'migration' or 'migratory'. If none is given, state your own.)

Understanding what this long word means, we can properly read Isaiah's words as if he had said, 'As birds migrate, so will the Lord defend Jerusalem'.

What can this mean? For answer, we turn to the flying bird itself, finding first of all that when a bird migrates it is always from a colder to a warmer country.

I. It hurries away from a land of snow and ice and desolation to the land of flowers and warmth and beauty.

<sup>1</sup> With it show also a picture of the Statue of Liberty, which stands on an island in the New York harbour, this statue being directly in the line of the migration of birds flying southward down the Hudson River valley. Many of the facts here given were gathered from observations made by two well-known specialists. The observations were made at night, during the migratory period, from the gallery or platform surrounding the torch.

So, the Lord, in 'defending Jerusalem,' His beloved Church, delivers her from the land of sin, where all is desolation and death, seeking by His grace to bring her, upon the pinions of faith and prayer, to that heavenly summer-land where all is joy and life for evermore. The bird flying towards the south, though the journey may be a long one, comes daily nearer to its beautiful home, so bright with glad sunshine. For you and me the journey to heaven may be a long and oftentimes dreary journey; yet every day the promise to the Church of her future rest grows more and more glorious. Yes, the many hard, weary experiences of this earthly life, with all its strange, unexpected changes, are rapidly passing; and some day, amid the splendours of heaven, we will forget all about these troubles.

II. Then, again; whenever a bird flies toward the warmer, happier country, it follows a line through the air which for generations birds have used. This line always leads to the southland, and is called the 'known line of migration'.

Now God, in defending (delivering) His children from sin, bringing them by His love, day by day, to heaven, bids them make this journey by a long-used, well-known Way, which Way is Christ. But this Way is sometimes apparently much divided, because we have so many denominations of Christians. Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians—all follow the lines of their own denominations. Happily, however, God is guiding them all by the power of His truth, through Jesus the Saviour, who is for ever the one only true Way to heaven. In Him all the lesser lines are included, just as heaven's great expanse includes all 'known lines of migration' throughout the world. God has given us all enough for our guidance to heaven, whether we belong to one denomination or another. The revelations of His Word are ample, and these are made still clearer to us by the help of the Holy Spirit, and by the growth of our own experience. As truly as the bird flying southward pursues the air-line followed by past generations of his kind, so God holds us all to the principles which were known to the earliest believer.

III. Again; birds, in migrating, fly at great heights above the earth—from one to even three miles. So in pursuing our heavenly way we must rise high above the things of earth, if we would insure our souls absolute safety from all dangers. Fly high above sin with its temptations. So will you have broad, clear views of the grandest and best in life about you, and so alone will you secure uninterrupted, cloudless glimpses of the land before us.

IV. Once more; birds are gifted with very keen sight and sharp hearing. At night they are guided as readily by sound as they are by sight in the daytime. Thus they follow the lines of flight with un-failing precision. Added to this well-balanced, twofold power, the bird possesses what may be known in other creatures as the 'sense of direction'. So, by a far-viewing faith and unerring obedience, keen for every hint of God's will, with a soul sensible to every call



to effort, the Christian is safely guided till he reaches his heavenly home. The bird seldom fails to reach his journey's end. Accidents, of course, are likely to happen; but these for the most part occur to careless birds—to those curious to stop and investigate any unusual, harmful object by the way, and to those birds, generally among the younger ones, who disregard the careful, watchful parent birds, who do not cease to warn them of all danger.

Finally, God delivers Jerusalem by directing what is kindly and helpful among Christians. Even a word of cheer, like an encouraging birdnote, given on the heavenly journey, may be of instant, recognised value in gaining a soul's salvation.—G. V. REICHEL, *What Shall I Tell the Children*, p. 49.

### IN SHELTER

'Parva sub ingenti.'

'The shadow of a great rock.'—ISAIAH XXXII. 2.

THESE words form the motto of Prince Edward Island, one of our possessions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, constituting part of the province of Canada, and situated close to Nova Scotia.

The arms of the island show a little tree under the shelter of a big one, whereby it is protected from the rough winds that sweep across the exposed land. This denotes the protection afforded to the small island by the large country of which it forms a part.

The words of the motto imply this consciousness of weakness and the need of clinging to the stronger power, but they also express, I imagine, something more, the pride, namely, of forming part of a great empire. If it is only a small island, yet it is as truly part of the British Empire as is the largest of all her colonies. The inhabitants have their rights and privileges as imperial citizens, and can claim the protection of all the laws, safeguards, and honours that belong to the subjects of that world-wide dominion.

These two ideas I wish to apply to our relation to Jesus Christ.

I. First of all, we are little and weak, and in ourselves helpless, but if we belong to Him we are made sharers in all His mighty power. We are like the little tree under the shelter of the big one, the rough blasts bend and toss about, but they cannot touch us. Sometimes, near the seashore, you may see whole extents of woodland, and all the trees are bent in one direction. Those nearest to the sea are short and stunted. The trees increase gradually in height, and the whole wood looks as if it had been cut with a knife, until at last, far inland, the trees attain their normal height, for the outside belt exposed to the sea breezes has suffered in its efforts to shelter its more favoured sisters. They only grow tall, straight, and well proportioned at the expense of the others which have borne the brunt of the storm, and lost their own beauty in consequence. Thus was it with Jesus, He came into the world and suffered at the hands of men all kinds of shame and mockery. As the prophet said in his wonderful, poetical descrip-

tion, 'He was as a root out of a dry ground, He had no form or comeliness, there was no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised as one from whom men hid their face, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.' All this Christ bore that we might not have to bear it, He stands between us and the might of temptation, He protects us from the sirocco (that dry desert wind) of sin.

He tempers the fierce blasts of persecution, and saves His little ones from many difficulties and dangers. To be in the hands of Christ means to be in the safest of shelters!

II. The other side of the truth of this motto lies in the fact that, because we belong to Christ, we are sharers in His power and dignity. It does not matter how young a prince of the royal house is, dignity and honour are rendered to him even if he be but a child, and from his earliest years he is taught to respect the traditions of the court. All the glory and honour of long generations are part of his inheritance, and because of them, as well as for his own sake, these forms and ceremonies are observed: child as he is, he soon learns that much depends upon his actions.

I dare say you have all heard the touching story of the late Queen Victoria, how one day her governess let her know she was the next heir to the throne. When the meaning of the statement dawned upon the girl, she threw her arms round her teacher's neck and said eagerly and with great earnestness, 'Oh, I *will* be good!' Often before she had rebelled against the drudgery of certain tasks that to her seemed useless, but when she realised all that depended upon her becoming worthy of the great dignity and trust that lay before her, she resolved with God's help to render herself fitted for it; so we, when we understand that we belong to the kingdom of heaven, may be encouraged to think how all its rules and resources are ready to our hand, as well as solemnised by the recollection of how great are the demands that may be made upon us. There are words of a very wise man which I remember hearing years ago, and have never forgotten. The writer of them is Pascal—the great French thinker and scholar. He says: 'Do small things as if they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ, who works them in us, and who lives our life; and great things as if they were small and easy, because of His omnipotence'.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 129.

### THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty.'—ISAIAH XXXIII. 17.

THE King here spoken of is Jesus. This promise refers to heaven. There will be many glorious things for us to see when we get to heaven. But the grandest, and the most beautiful of all, will be to see Jesus Himself. The Apostle Paul says that there 'we shall see Him as He is'. It must have been a blessed thing

to have seen Jesus when He was on earth; but *that* was nothing compared to what it will be to see Him in heaven. When Jesus was here, in this world, we have no reason to suppose that He was remarkable for the beauty of His appearance. We are not told, indeed, by the good men who wrote His life in the Gospels, how He looked. The Prophet Isaiah is the only one of the sacred writers who has given any particular account of His appearance 'when Jesus was seen among men'. And he speaks of Him as 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; with no form, nor comeliness, and with no beauty that we should desire Him' (Isa. LIII. 2, 3).

But it will be very different when we come to see Jesus in heaven. There will be wonderful beauty and glory about Him there. And those who love and serve Him here, will see all this beauty and glory there. Jesus prayed for this very thing when He was here on earth. In the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, we have written out for us the great prayer which Jesus offered for His people, just before He went to be crucified. In the twenty-fourth verse of that chapter, we have these wonderful words, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; *that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me*'. These words of Jesus, in His prayer, give us the best explanation we can have of the meaning of the Prophet Isaiah, when he wrote the sweet promise contained in our present text, 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty'. If you ask me to tell you what this promise means, I would answer the question by turning to these words of Jesus in His prayer, 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory'. The King spoken of in one of these passages is Jesus, who is speaking Himself in the other passage. The 'beauty' that Isaiah speaks of is the same thing as the 'glory' that Jesus prays about. Isaiah calls it 'The King's beauty'. Jesus calls it 'My glory'. Isaiah does not tell us where this beauty was to be seen; but Jesus tells us. He says it will be 'where I am'. And we know very well where Jesus is. Jesus is in heaven. And every one who loves Jesus can look up to Him and say—

'Tis where Thou art is heaven to me,  
And heaven without Thee cannot be.

And so these words of Isaiah lead our thoughts up to heaven, 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty'. We all hope to go to heaven when we die. If we really love and serve Jesus, we certainly *shall* go there. And so we should be interested in hearing of what we are to see when we get there. God has not told us much concerning heaven. We should try to understand all that He has told us. The Apostle Paul was taken to heaven before he died, and then came back again to earth. He saw 'the King in His beauty' there; but he never told about it. He said he was not allowed to tell what he had seen (2 Cor. xii. 4).

And so we can only learn about heaven by studying what God has told us of it in His blessed Word. This passage in Isaiah is one of the places in which it is spoken of. 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.'

And when we come to think of the beauty, or glory, of Jesus in heaven, there are *three* things with which that glory will be connected, and which we must speak of, in order to understand this subject properly.

**I. The First of these is 'the Place' where Jesus will be when we see Him in His Beauty.**—We call this place *heaven*. In the Bible it is compared to different things. Sometimes it is spoken of as a *paradise*, or garden, full of all bright and beautiful things. When Adam and Eve were first created, you know that God put them in such a garden, or paradise. In that garden, we are told that God made to grow 'every tree that was pleasant to the eye and good for food'. And we know they would have been perfectly happy there if they had only minded what God told them. But Satan got in there, in the form of a serpent, and tempted them to eat of the tree of which God had said they must not eat. And then they were driven out. In this way that Paradise was lost. But Jesus came to restore it to us. And heaven is compared to a garden, because it will be a place in some respects like the garden of Eden. It will be a 'Paradise Restored'. But it will be better than the first Paradise, because Satan will never be allowed to get into it to tempt us. And we shall never sin, and never be put out of it. Heaven is spoken of as a Paradise in 2 Corinthians xii. 2, 4, and Revelations ii. 7.

A little girl was gazing up at the starry sky one clear night. She seemed to be very much occupied in thinking about something. Her mother said to her, 'What are you thinking about, my dear?'

'Oh, mamma!' she said, 'I was thinking if the *outside* of heaven is so beautiful, how *very* beautiful it must be *inside*!'

A very sweet thought, indeed, and one we may often consider ourselves when we look up at the sky on a clear, bright night, and see how it sparkles in its loveliness. *That* is the outside of heaven.

Sometimes when people are dying the heavenly land, where Jesus is, comes very near them, so that they can see it before they die.

*The land beyond the mountains.*—A little boy lay dying. His father and mother were sitting on one side of his little bed, and the doctor was waiting and watching near. He had been silent for some time, and appeared to sleep. They thought he might pass away as he slept. But suddenly his blue eyes opened, wide and clear, and a sweet smile broke over his face. He looked upwards very earnestly, and then turning to his mother said, 'Mother, what is that beautiful land that I see there, beyond the mountains?'

'I don't see any mountains, my dear,' said the mother.

'Look there, mother dear,' he said, pointing up.

'They are very near now: so large and high; and the country beyond them seems so beautiful! The people are so happy; and there are no sick children there. Is that the heavenly land I see?'

'Yes, my child,' his mother sobbed, 'that is the heavenly land where Jesus dwells.'

'Oh, mother!—Oh, father! don't be sorry for me; but come after me to that beautiful land. Good-bye, mother dear, I'm going now; and Jesus has sent His angel to carry me over the mountains.'

These were his last words. He died in his mother's arms. The angel carried him over the mountains to 'see the King in his beauty'. But he had caught a glimpse of its brightness before he went away. The *beauty of the place* is one of the things that will help to make up the glory, or beauty, that we shall see in Jesus when we go to heaven.

**II. The Second Thing will be 'the Company' about Jesus when we see Him in His Beauty.**—However beautiful the *place* may be, which is to be our heaven, we never could be satisfied with that alone. Jewelled walls, and pearly gates, and golden streets are all very well. They must be wondrously beautiful. But these, of themselves, could never make us happy. When we go to the house we live in, and which we call *home*, what is it that makes it feel so sweet and pleasant to us? It is not the walls of the building. It is not the furniture of the rooms—the tables, the chairs, the carpets on the floor, or the pictures that hang on the walls. It is not these things that make that place home to us; but it is the presence there of a dear father or mother, of brothers and sisters, of those whom we love, and who, we know, love us. And so it will be with heaven. The *place* will have something to do with the beauty we shall see, and the happiness we shall enjoy there; but the *company* will have much more to do with it.

And now let us talk a little about the company we shall meet in heaven. Who will make up this company? Well, to begin with, the angels will form a part of this company. We are told in the Bible that there will be in heaven 'an innumerable company of angels' (Heb. xii. 22). I never saw an angel. You never saw an angel. No doubt that any of us would feel frightened if we should see one come into the room where we were. But we know, from what the Bible tells us, that the angels are very beautiful. They are always spoken of as clothed in white. They are sometimes spoken of as having wings, but not always. Sometimes they have appeared in the form of men or women, but without any wings. We are not told how they looked; but we know that they must be very beautiful in their appearance. And to see such a beautiful place as heaven is, filled with such beautiful beings as angels are, must help to make heaven very beautiful.

But now, I think I hear one of you say, 'Ah! yes; the angels, I dare say, are very beautiful. But then I don't know them; and they don't know me. I should be afraid of them. I don't think I could feel at home, or happy with them.'

This is very natural. And if there were to be none but angels in the company of heaven, it would not feel very much like home to us. But then there will be others in heaven besides the angels. All the good people that we read about in the Bible will be there. Abraham will be there; and so will Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and Peter, and John, and Paul. And all the good people who have died since will be there too.

But then the company of heaven comes nearer to us even than this. I suppose there is not one person who will read these pages but has some friend, or relation, in heaven. Have you lost a beloved father, or mother, or uncle, or aunt, who loved Jesus? You will find them in heaven. Have you lost a dear brother, or sister, old enough to love and serve Jesus? You will find them in heaven.

*The stranger not a stranger.*—In the early settlement of the city of Cincinnati, there was only one way for persons to get there, and that was by means of the flat-boats that passed up and down the Ohio river.

On one occasion a boat landed there. It had come down the river from Pittsburgh. There was a company of people on board that boat who were going to Cincinnati to live there. Their friends were expecting their arrival, and had met, down by the side of the river, to welcome them. As they left the boat their friends gathered around them to shake hands with them, and give them the warmest kind of a welcome.

But in that company who had just arrived, there was one who was a stranger. He had no friends, or anyone that knew him in Cincinnati. There was no one there to shake hands with him, or bid him welcome to the place. He had been feeling lonely before, he felt ten times more so now.

The crowd was beginning to scatter, leaving that stranger alone on the boat. Leaning over the railing of the boat he called after them, saying—

'Friends, if there are any of you who love the Lord Jesus Christ, I am your brother.'

In a moment half a dozen of them were at his side. They shook him warmly by the hand, and bade him welcome to their homes.

How different Cincinnati seemed to that stranger now from what it did a moment before! The *place* indeed was the same; but oh, how different the *company* seemed! He was among friends now, and that made him feel at home.

And so it will be with us when we get to heaven. Jesus will know and love every one who enters there. He will introduce us to those who are there, and they will all love us, because we love Jesus. Angels and Christians, old and young, men, women, and children, will all make one great happy family.

'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.' There will be beauty in the *place*, and beauty in the *company*.

**III. But there is a Third Thing that will have more to do with the Beauty of Heaven than either**



**the Place or the Company—and that is ‘The Person and Presence of Jesus’.**—There was a celebrated painter once, who was making a picture of Jesus in the midst of his twelve Apostles. In arranging the picture he concluded to paint the Apostles first, and not begin with their Master till he had finished them. As he went on with the picture he tried to do the very best he could with each of the Apostles. He took the greatest pains with their figures, their positions, their dress, and their faces. As he went on with his work he was very well pleased with it. After finishing the Apostles he began with the person of Jesus. He got on very well with this till he came to the head and face of our blessed Lord. Then he laid down his brush and paused. He felt that the face of Jesus ought to be made to appear as much more beautiful than His disciples, as the sun is more glorious than the stars. But how could he do this? He had tried so hard to make the disciples look well that he felt he had no power left to make their Master appear as much superior to them as He ought to appear. And so he finished the person of Jesus all but the head, and then painted Him with a white mantle thrown over His head. He thought that when persons came to look at his painting, they could *imagine* what the face of Jesus ought to be better than he could represent it by painting.

And I feel very much as that painter did, when I come to speak about *the person and presence of Jesus in heaven*. All who love Jesus here on earth agree in saying that from what they know of Him now, He is ‘the chief among ten thousand, and *altogether lovely*’. Then how will He appear when our eyes come to ‘see the King in His beauty,’ in heaven? Just look for a moment at what some good Christian men have said about Jesus, from what they knew of Him here in this world.

While John Newton was thinking of Him, he said:—

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer’s ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.

A good Roman Catholic, who lived more than 600 years ago, expressed his feelings thus:—

Jesus, the very thought of Thee,  
With sweetness fills my breast,  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy bosom rest.  
Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Saviour of mankind.

When Dr. Doddridge was thinking about Him he said:—

Jesus, I love Thy charming name,  
‘Tis music to my ear;  
Fain would I sound it out so loud  
That earth and heaven might hear.  
All my capacious powers can wish  
In Thee doth richly meet,  
Not to my eyes is light so dear,  
Nor friendship half so sweet.

And Charles Wesley when thinking about Him burst out thus:—

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise!  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace!

Jesus! the name that calms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease;  
‘Tis music in the sinner’s ears,  
‘Tis life, and health, and peace.

When such men get to heaven it will not be the riches that adorn the *place*, nor the perfection of the *company* there, that will make up its chief beauty to them. No, but it will be the *person and presence of Jesus* there that will constitute the charm, the glory, the fullness of heaven’s joy to their souls. And this is just what Dr. Muhlenberg speaks of in that beautiful hymn of his, in which heaven is spoken of as a place:—

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,  
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet,  
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,  
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

The person and presence of Jesus, and ‘the smile of the Lord,’ both mean the same thing.

A Sunday-school teacher was visiting one of her scholars who was soon to die. The sick child was a Christian. She expressed an earnest desire to go to heaven.

‘Why do you wish so much to go there, Mary?’ asked her teacher.

‘Because Jesus is there, and I long so to see Him.’

‘But suppose, Mary, that when you get there, you should find that Jesus was going out of heaven, what would you do?’

‘I would go out with Him,’ was her quick reply. She felt that there could be no heaven to her without Jesus.

‘Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty.’ Remember, there are three things with which this beauty will be connected. These are: the *place*—the *company*—and the *person and presence of Jesus*.

There is one very important lesson we should learn from this subject; it is this: *we must learn to love Jesus here, or else His presence in heaven will not make us happy*.

We see this lesson illustrated in the Hindu fable about the crane. The fable says that one day a crane was contentedly eating snails in a marsh. As she was thus engaged a bird flew down from the sky and lighted near her. ‘Where do you come from?’ asked the crane. ‘From heaven,’ was the answer.

‘What have you seen in heaven?’ asked the crane. ‘Everything that can make people happy.’ And then the bird went on and described some of the joys of that blessed place.

‘Have they any snails in heaven?’ asked the crane, as much as to say—‘I don’t care to be in any place where there are no snails’.

‘You vulgar, low-bred creature!’ said the bird, and flew away offended.

Now suppose that this crane had been taken to heaven; would it have been happy there? Not at all. It would have been longing all the time for the marsh where it used to wade and catch snails. We must be *prepared* for heaven if we hope to be happy there. And there is only one true preparation. This is—*learning to know and love Jesus*. If we really love Him, we shall be perfectly happy to be where He is. And when our 'eyes see the King in His beauty,' that will satisfy us for ever. We shall want nothing else. *That will be a perfect heaven to us.*—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 3.

### A ROAD FOR GOD

(Advent)

'A highway for our God.'—ISAIAH XL. 3.

'A HIGHWAY'—a road—a path for God! How very strange this sounds. God is a Spirit. How can He want a road, or how can there be a path for Him to walk in? We shall see.

But I want you first to try to remember three things in your Bible.

1. The first thing is this—that the great prophet Isaiah, more than 700 years before Jesus Christ was born, spoke about 'the Voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God'. Now we know from the Gospels that this 'Voice' means St. John the Baptist. It was *he* who was to cry out this about making a road for God.

2. The second thing is this—that another prophet called Malachi, about 400 years before Jesus Christ was born, wrote down what God told him, and one thing he wrote was this, 'Behold I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare My way before Me'. We know again from the Gospels that this messenger means St. John the Baptist. He was himself to prepare the way—which is the same thing as making a road—for God.

3. The third thing I want you to remember is this—that when St. John the Baptist was born, about six months before Jesus Christ was, his father, the good old priest Zacharias, made a beautiful hymn of thanks and praise. You know it very well, for you often sing it in Church. It begins, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people'. In one part of that hymn Zacharias speaks to his own little child, who was only eight days old, and he says, 'Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways'. Mark these words, 'to prepare His ways'. Zacharias knew his Bible. He knew what the Holy Spirit of God had taught the prophets to say, and he knew his own little son was the 'Voice' and the 'Messenger' they spoke of. He knew that that little child, when he grew up, would have to *prepare the way of the Lord*—that is, to make a road for God.

Now you want to know how a road can be made for God. But I want you first to know who God is.

And I will ask you a question which I am sure you can all answer:—

Whose forerunner was John the Baptist? [Jesus Christ's.] Yes, it was for Jesus Christ that he had to prepare the way. And now you see that Jesus Christ is called God. 'A highway for our God' means a highway for Jesus Christ.

Now we must think of these two things: (1) *Where* the highway was to be made; and (2) *How* it was to be made.

1. Where? 'In the desert,' the prophet says. 'The desert': that is a barren, desolate place—all dry, hot sand stretching for miles and miles, or else all rocks and hills, where nobody lives and nobody tills the ground. There are deserts of that sort far away in the East, and it is very hard to travel through them. But it cannot be that sort of a desert which is meant. No, it is not a *real* desert through which a road has to be made for Jesus. Yet it is a place very like a desert too. Shall I tell you where it is? It is in the North, and in the South, and in the East, and in the West. It is in England. It is in this church. Now can you guess? Or shall I tell you that it is the *heart of man*? That is the desert. Is it not like one? It ought to be like a beautiful garden, all full of sweet flowers and fruits. But I think in most of our hearts there is at least some little part—some out-of-the-way corner, if no more, so dry and hard and barren, or so tangled with ugly useless weeds, that it is more like a desert than a garden. Yes, and there—right through these hearts of ours—that road has to be made for our God!

But why? What does He want it for? He wants it that He may come to you, and bring you all sorts of wonderful blessings. He has got more good things and more beautiful things and more wonderful things ready for you than you can think of. And He loves you very greatly, and longs to find a way into your hearts. Will you make Him a way that He may come? Will you try if you can make a road fit for Him to walk along?

2. Ah! but this brings us to my second question. How is the road to be made?

Now, we will look again into our Bibles and see if they tell us anything about it. Why, here is the very thing described for us. When the prophet Isaiah tells us about the highway to be made for God, he goes on at once, 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain'. That is exactly the way anybody would make a road anywhere. Did you ever see a new railway being made? What did they do with the valleys or hollows? [Filled them up.] Yes; they had to be 'exalted'—lifted up. And the mountains and hills? [Cut them down.] Yes; they were 'made low'. And the crooked places were—? [Made straight.] And the rough—? [Made smooth.] To be sure. Now it is just the same when we want a road made in our hearts. Do you think you could tell me what all these things mean? Try and think.

The valleys or hollows—don't you think they are a very good likeness of all the things we have left undone which we ought to have done—of all our past idleness, and neglect, and carelessness? These have to be filled up. Yes, indeed, you must set to work. Your loving Saviour cannot come to you so long as there is that great hole in the road. Set to work and fill it up. Throw into it all the pains, and care, and diligence, and activity you can. There must be no more sloth and idleness.

Then there are the mountains and hills. And I dare say you could tell me of a good many things which stand up before your souls so as to hinder Jesus from coming to you. What do you think of pride? or self-will? or obstinacy? I am quite sure He won't climb over these to come to you. You must get them out of the way. They must be brought low.

Then the crooked places—I suppose they would mean all crooked ways of lying and deceit and untruthfulness. You know we call a truthful person *straightforward*, because he does not turn about to this side or to that in what he says, but goes straight to the truth. Well; whatever is not straightforward is crooked, and the crooked path is one which Jesus loves not. It must be made straight.

Once more—there are rough places. What do they picture to us? I think rough tempers, and rough words, and rough manners. They speak to us of such feelings as anger, and spite, and ill-nature, and revenge, and unkindness of all sorts; of cutting and cruel words, and of quarrelling and fighting. Such rough places must be made plain—i.e. smooth, if the road is to be one fit for the meek and gentle Jesus to walk upon.

Now, this road-making is hard work, and you are very weak, and you feel as if you could not do much. Well; answer me this question: When they are making a new road or railway, and have a high hill to cut down or a great hollow to fill up, how much soil can one man take away from the hill or throw into the hollow at one time? [Only a spadeful.] Only a spadeful! And what is the use of that? One spadeful makes no difference. Nay, but it does. And a great many spadefuls make a great difference. Now I want you to begin just with one spadeful. Ask God to show you some one little thing you can go and do for Him, or some one little sin you can begin to cut down for Him, and set to work.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Sermons to Children*, p. 1.

#### A ROAD FOR GOD

\* Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.' ISAIAH XL. 3, 4.

I. LET us think, *first*, where the road for Jesus is to be made. Isaiah says it is to be made in the desert—'make straight in the desert a highway for our God'—you know, I expect, what a desert is. A desert is a dry, hot place—all sand and rocks, where the heat of the sun pours down in a way you never feel it in

England, even on the hottest days. It is all dry hot sand and rocks, stretching for miles and miles, and nobody can live there. Far away in the East there are deserts of this kind; and it is very hard to travel across them because the heat is so great, and there is no water there. But it was not in a desert like this that St. John the Baptist was to make 'a highway for our God'. No, this is not the kind of desert through which a road is to be made for Jesus, though it is very much like a desert—in fact, it is a desert of another kind.

Our hearts are the desert through which a road is to be made for Jesus. And is not our heart like a desert?

It ought not to be like a desert, I know. It ought to be like a beautiful garden, full of sweet flowers and fruit. It ought to be like a fruitful vineyard bringing forth beautiful grapes. But I am afraid that in all our hearts there is at least some little spot, even if it is only some out-of-the-way corner, which is so dry and barren and so full of ugly weeds that it is more like a desert than a garden full of sweet flowers, or a vineyard full of beautiful grapes. And that is the part of the vineyard which has been attacked and spoilt by 'the little foxes that spoil the vines,' and instead of bringing forth the good grapes Jesus looks for it only brings forth 'wild grapes,' like untruthfulness and disobedience and sulky tempers.

But it is right across these hearts of ours which are so like a desert in God's sight that we have to make that road for God.

It was by telling people of their sins, and to love Jesus, that St. John the Baptist was to be Christ's messenger, and prepare a way before Him; and so it is by repenting of our sins, and giving them up, that we are to make a road for God in our hearts.

And why does God want a road made for Him in our hearts?

Well, He wants this road made for Him so that He may come to us along it, and bring us His wonderful blessings. He has more blessings for us than we can think of. The Bible tells us, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him'. He longs to find His way into your hearts, for He loves you so much that He wants to come and bring you all these blessings; so I hope you will ask God to help you to make a road in your hearts for Him to come to you.

II. We have thought now where the road for Jesus is to be made, and we see that it is to be made in our hearts. Now we come to the *second question*—how this road is to be made.

The prophet Isaiah, who tells us about the highway St. John the Baptist was to make for Jesus, also tells us how it was to be made. He says, 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain'.

And this is just how people make roads in these days. You can see it especially in the way railways are made.



There must be a level line for the trains to run along, as they would not be able to go down a steep hill-side into a valley and then up another hill, so they must have a straight road made for them to go along. And to make this straight road the valleys are filled up, and the hills have to be levelled down or a tunnel made through them. All this has to be done for the trains to have a straight line to run along.

And just in the same way we have to make a road for Jesus in our hearts. Let us think how we are to make it.

'Every valley shall be exalted.' These valleys remind us of the things we have left undone in our past idleness and neglect and carelessness.

They remind us of such things as idleness at school, or over any particular work that God has given us to do. They remind us of the opportunities of doing right that we have lost.

So in making this road for God into our hearts, we must first of all with His help, fill up these valleys by overcoming our idleness and neglect of duty. Your Saviour who loves you so much cannot come to you while there are these great holes in the road; so you must set to work to fill them up, for 'every valley shall be exalted'. You must pray to God to help you to put all the care and diligence and activity you can into this work of filling up the valleys by overcoming idleness and carelessness.

Then there are the mountains and hills.

The second thing in making the road is that 'every mountain and hill shall be made low'. I am afraid that with all of us there are many mountains and hills that come between Jesus and our souls, and prevent Him from coming to us. For instance, one of them may be pride, which says I won't do this thing I am told—I am not accustomed to being told to do such things. I am above it.

But if we are told to do things we consider beneath us, this is an opportunity for us to overcome our pride, and to be like Jesus who was 'meek and lowly in heart'.

Another mountain to be brought low may be disobedience; so when we are told to do something we don't like, we must still remember the example of Jesus, and we must just ask Him to help us to be as obedient as He was, instead of refusing to obey, and getting very sulky when we are told to do something we don't like, remembering that when He was found in the Temple, by His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, He obeyed them at once, and without stopping to ask any questions, for 'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them'.

Pride and disobedience and other sins like them are the mountains and hills that stand on the road, between Jesus and our souls, and they must be made low, for Jesus will not climb over these hills to come to us.

Then, the next thing in making this road is that 'the crooked places shall be made straight'. These crooked places are deceit and untruthfulness. You know we call a truthful person straightforward—that

is the opposite of crooked—because he does not turn about to this side or that, in what he says, or when asked a question, but he tells the truth at once. Well, whatever is not straightforward is crooked; and Jesus, 'who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,' does not like crooked paths, and will not come along them to us, so we must make the crooked paths straight for Him to walk along. Then, one more thing we have to do in making the road is to make the rough places plain. The rough places in the road are our bad sulky tempers, and unkind words, and angry feelings, and spite, and ill-nature. When we make our road for Jesus, all these rough places must be made smooth.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 105.

### MOUNTING AS WITH EAGLES' WINGS

'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.'—ISAIAH XL, 31.

Did you ever see an eagle? A noble bird, the king of the birds, the eagle. I want you to think a little about the eagle. I will tell you something more. I want you to be like an eagle. I want everybody in this church to be like an eagle.

I will tell you about the eagle's nest. The eagle makes a nest of thorns, and over the thorns the eagle puts some very soft things—some wool or some down over the thorns. And there the eagle lays its eggs, and when the eggs are hatched the little eagles come out into the nest, and there they stay. And when it is time for the little eagles to fly, what do you think the old eagle does? With his great talons he scratches off the soft wool and the down, and then the thorns prick the little birds and they must fly because the thorns prick them. And so they fly away, and fly away because the thorns prick them. And what do you think the old eagle does then? He is such a kind old bird. He comes and puts his great wings under the wings of the little birds and helps them to fly; and so the young eaglets can fly very high, because their father, the old eagle, helps them with his great wings to fly away. And then they go up, and up very high; and if you have ever seen a great bird—a great hawk, or a kite, or an eagle, as I have seen an eagle, it is very beautiful to see how it flies. It goes up very high, and it makes great circles round and round, and goes very fast, and yet you hardly see it move its wings. It seems almost to go without flapping its wings. It is so grand, so large a circle, and it does it so quietly, so quietly, up very high and round and round. The eagle has got a very little eye. It has a very small eye; but with that little eye the eagle looks straight at the sun. You dare not look at the sun; you would have to shut your eyes: but the eagle looks straight at the sun.

Will you remember about the nest what makes the little eaglets fly, what the old eagle does with his wings, and his little eye looking at the sun? I

want you to be like that, all of you. Think how you are to be like that.

Have you got a nest? Young eagles, what is your nest? Is it your nice comfortable bed? Is it your home? Is that your nest—all so pleasant and soft? Do you think troubles will never come into your nest? The thorns *will* prick. Have they ever come yet? Have you ever had any troubles, any thorns in the nest? I do not know whether you have yet; I think you will sometime; and when the thorns come, the troubles, what is it you have to do? To fly; get up higher—get up higher. You may not stay in your comfortable nest always. Fly away where God chooses you to be. Get up nearer heaven. Can you, can you fly up? Yes, if the Great Eagle puts His wings underneath. If God your Father helps you to fly, then you can fly ever so high. Because God helps you you will be able to fly; and you will be very quiet, just like the eagle's quiet life. You will go a great way, and will have great thoughts, and you will be high up, and looking down upon everything. You will be calm and quiet like the eagle. Your little eye—not this eye—the eye of your mind, the eye of your soul—you have got an eye in here—the eye of your mind will look at the Sun. What Sun? The Lord Jesus Christ. That is His name in the Bible. He is called 'the Sun of Righteousness' (Mal. iv. 2). You will be able to think about Jesus as if you saw Him. He will be so near to you and kind to you. You will love Him so that you will always like to see Him.

You will find that what I have told you about the eagle is in the Bible. Will you turn to the Book of Deuteronomy? Perhaps you have never thought of it, but you will see what I have told you is in the Bible. Will you look at Deuteronomy—the thirty-second chapter and the eleventh verse? There it all is. 'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them'—taketh the young—'beareth them on her wings.' You see what an eagle does. 'The eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them on her wings'. That is what God will do with you young eagles.

Now I want you to go up very high. I want you to 'mount up with wings as eagles'. Is it right to be ambitious? Is it right to wish to get up very high? Is it right? I think it is. I think we ought to get up very high in everything—in *everything*. I think we ought to wish to be at the top of the class. I think we ought to wish to get up to a higher class; to get to the top of the school. I think we ought to wish to be the cleverest people—the cleverest people in Brighton. To know more than anybody else; to be very strong; to run very quick; to leap very high; to play a very good game of cricket; to be at the top of everything—in all your games, all your books, and all your studies. I would not give much for the boy or girl who was not ambitious.

Do you remember two young men once came to Jesus with their mother; and the mother said, and

the young men said, 'Let us be high in heaven; give us to sit one on the right hand and the other on the left'. Was Jesus angry with them? Did He blame them? Not a bit. He said, 'You don't know what you ask. You will have to go through a great deal.' He never told them they were wrong. They were right to be ambitious. I do not mean to be ambitious for worldly pleasures and worldly things, which will all pass away.

I do not know whether it is so now, but I should like to tell you what was done some time ago, when the great Pope was crowned, the Pope of Italy. Perhaps it is done now. There was a great procession, and the Pope walked in the procession, and before him there walked a man who carried in one hand a lighted taper, and in the other some flax, and as he went along he took some of the flax and lighted it with the lighted taper. The flax burnt, and the ashes that fell off it dropped just at the feet of the Pope as he walked along, just where he was going to tread, and as he did so the clergyman—the priest—who was walking by said, 'Holy Father, thus passes away the glory of this world'. This was to remind the Pope when he was going to be crowned that just as that flax was all burnt up, and only a black cinder left, so the glory of this world would perish. I want that kind of ambition which is true ambition.

A great painter was in company with another painter, and the other painter said to the great painter, 'How is it that you paint so very well? You paint so few pictures, while I paint so many pictures.' Said the great painter, 'You paint for time, I paint for eternity'. That means, 'Your painting is for a little time, but I paint what shall last. I am painting for eternity.' I am learning my lessons for eternity. I am doing all for eternity. I am making my friendships for eternity. That is the good ambition. Something which will last for ever. I work for eternity, I go up high. I wish to be great, wise, powerful, because I wish it for eternity.

Now, I call each of you an eagle, but I will tell you what I am afraid you are; what I don't like to see. What do you think it is? An eagle in a cage. I don't like to see an eagle in a cage. That noble bird, meant to soar and fly away, will knock himself about and not be happy in a cage. And I am afraid some of you are as an eagle in a cage, that you ought to fly high, and you don't fly high. You ought to be doing good, but you are in a cage. Your thoughts are shut up. I think perhaps your body is the cage, and your soul is the eagle. Your soul is in your body, and your body is like a cage to your soul, and shuts it up. Perhaps it is some naughty thing, some naughty temper, some wrong feeling, idleness, perhaps, and that is the cage. You are a lazy boy, you are a lazy girl, you are in a cage, and the eagle cannot fly, because you are shut up in a cage.

Now I want you not to be shut up in a cage, but to 'mount up with wings as eagles'. *Mount up!* That means I want you to get higher up in all your thoughts, higher up in your prayers, higher up in

your reading, higher up in your feelings. High up, high up, nearer heaven, nearer heaven, high up. I want you to get so high up that you shall look down on a great many things. You shall be like a person on the top of a mountain. How little these things must look to an eagle when he is high up. Get up that you may see these things. St. Paul says, 'None of these things'—the troubles—'move me'. He was above them. Get up above. Have you any boys at school unkind to you? Have you any girls at school unkind to you? Have you any trouble at school? Have you any troubles at home? Have you? Are they bad? Have you got to do something that is very disagreeable? Get higher up, look down at it. You will be astonished to see how easy it is when you get up. Think about grand things and great things, and then these things will be so small. I suppose there is no one in the church but what has some trouble. I have, and I find the best way is to get up high. Have 'the wings of eagles'; look down on it all, and then you know we shall not care much about it.

The eagle sometimes is weak. Will you look at a passage which I will show you in which it says so? It says it in my text, but it is also in the 103rd Psalm and the fifth verse, 'Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's'. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength' (Isa. xi. 31). You know this, that every bird moults. Every horse some time in the year loses his coat. His hair drops off. Every bird loses his feathers. He gets weak and moults. Now at times we get very weak; sometimes you feel so out of spirits you feel very weak, too weak to bear anything. You are like the eagle. The eagle moults, and you moults. If any boy or girl is cross, and cannot bear some things, you are moulting, you are moulting. But there is a promise which I shall look at presently, there is a promise that 'those who wait upon the Lord' shall get over their moulting, and go on again in new strength. Do you think you are moulting? Last week did you feel very much out of temper, very uncomfortable? You could not get any victory over yourself. Well, then, you have been moulting. Be an eagle, and you will 'renew your strength,' and trouble will look so small, and you will say, 'Why was I so cross about that? It is nothing. I am quite unworthy of it. I am quite ashamed of myself.' And so you will 'renew your strength,' and you will go on again to do better.

Now I want to say a little more, for it says in the text, 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint'. Which is best—'running' or 'walking'? Which did you do first when you were a little child, a baby? Which did you do first, run first or walk? The child runs first; it runs before it walks. It is easier to run than to walk. I have seen a little child when it is left alone. It makes a little rush at its mother. It cannot walk quite steadily and quietly yet. Which do you do, run or walk? Some boys and girls like running best,

and some like walking best. Some are always running. Some in this church are the running ones, and some the walking ones. It is a good thing to do both. You see if you run you may get tired, and if you walk you may get faint. But here God says, 'They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint'.

Did you ever hear of a great mathematician who lived a long while ago? He was one of the greatest mathematicians, and knew about the stars. He was an astronomer, and was a very learned man. And he has written his life, and he says what happened to him when a boy. He says when a boy he got tired of mathematics, and he was going to give it all up. I suppose he was moulting. He said, 'I shall give it up, I shall never be a clever man'. Well, very strangely, as he was thinking that, he saw a piece of paper on the cover of his book, and somehow or other, he could never tell why, he thought he should like to have it, and he got some water and damped it, and then got this piece of paper off, and on it was written, 'Go on, sir; go on, sir'. And he said afterwards, 'That was my master. I had no other master; that bit of paper was my master. I went on—I went on, I would not give it up, and all through my life that has been my master, and to it I owe everything. It has taught me all my mathematics. It has taught me to "Go on, sir; go on, sir"'. I wish you to bear that in mind. Go on. Don't think that you have got to the top. Go on. Don't be discouraged. Go on. You don't get a victory. Go on. You cannot master that sum. Go on, go on. 'Go on, sir; go on, sir,' let that be your master. If you take that as your master I think you will 'run and not be weary'. You will go on and on.

There were two little girls. They were each carrying a heavy basket, and one little girl could not manage her basket at all. She was very angry about its being so heavy. She said to the other girl, 'How do you manage to carry your basket so well?' The other girl said, 'When I loaded my basket I put in something. I always do put something in my basket.' What do you think it was? 'I always put patience in. I am careful to put in patience, and so I can carry it, and I don't get tired.' Now always put patience in your basket, and then you 'will run, and not be weary; and walk, and not faint'. And all the while the great wings of the Great Eagle will be under you. You cannot do anything without the great wings. Shall I tell you what these 'wings' are? What should you think are the wings to fly to heaven? Are they God's promises? I should say they are God's promises. You may find the promises; then fly with the promises. 'Where am I to fly?' Oh! higher and higher. 'They shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'

Now all this is a promise—this is the last thing I want to speak to you about—all this is a promise to those who 'wait upon the Lord'. What is it to 'wait upon the Lord'? 'They that wait upon the



Lord'—though they moult—'they shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.' I should like to tell you what I think it is.

The first thing is we must pray. Wait in prayer. Wait and pray. That I say is the first thing—to pray. And then wait for the answer. Wait, wait for the answer. Did you ever shoot an arrow up into the sky very high? Didn't you watch to see where it came down? Do that with your prayers. Send up your prayer and watch to see where it comes down. It may not come where you expected, but it will come somewhere. Whenever you send up a true prayer there will come down the answer somewhere. Wait for it. It may come that day, or a long time afterwards, but it will come at some time. Every real prayer brings the answer. It won't always look the same arrow that you sent up, but some good thing will come back. Wait for it, wait for it.

The next thing I would advise you to do is to pray about your duties. Pray about everything you have to do. If you have any difficulty, pray about it, and wait for the answer. Nothing is too little to pray to God about. If you have a difficult sum to do, if you have a difficult problem to construe, if you have a difficult thing to write, pray to God about it.

There was a great man; he was a poor monk at first, but he rose to be a great man. It was a long time ago; and when he was King of Spain, governing a great part of Spain, his lords and nobles and all the great people assembled one day in his hall, and wanted him to go as king and do something. They waited some time, and at last the door opened. Inside the door was a poor miserable room, with nothing in the room but a place to kneel at. And there was the king kneeling in this little room by himself. When they all seemed surprised he said, 'To pray is to govern.' 'To pray is to govern.' Five words. That is the way to govern—to pray. I should advise every master and mistress, and every king and queen, if I could tell them, that to pray is to govern. If you 'wait upon the Lord,' and get the promise, 'you shall renew your strength; and mount up with wings as eagles'.

Let me advise you another thing when waiting—keep your eye upon God. Think about God. Look at the 123rd Psalm, that tells exactly how we are to do it. The second verse: 'Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that He have mercy upon us'. What does it mean? 'But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.' Think, what does it mean? Supposing I was learning to be a shoemaker, and I wanted to make a shoe, I should look to see how my master made it. Supposing I was a woman, and I had to sew, and my mistress was sewing, I should look at her

in order to sew. In the same way that you look to the hand of your master and mistress, you should look to God. Let your eye be fixed upon God. Think about God, and how He wishes you to do things. Then you 'wait upon the Lord'.

One thing more I will tell you about waiting. Every day wait and think, perhaps Jesus will come to-day! He is sure to come some day. A little boy used to jump out of bed every morning and go to the window and look to the east to see whether Jesus was coming. He expected Him every morning. Wait for Him; wait in prayer, wait for the answer, wait by watching what is God's will; wait for Jesus. If you will do that you will 'mount up with wings as eagles'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND

ISAIAH XLII. 18.

IN the city of London, about sixty years ago, lived a man who, like the youth in the painter's story, had been forgetting God. But he was like him in little else. He had to work for his bread. He had not spent his wages in gambling, nor in attending horse-races, nor in any evil way. The evil in his life was only this: he had ceased to remember God.

God was not in all his thoughts. He went out; he came in; he lay down; he rose up, and never asked God to be with him, or to watch over him, or to bless him. He tried to live and be a husband, father, and workman without God.

But although he had forgotten God, God had not forgotten him. In mercy He sent forth His storm to smite him, and he was smitten; and days came to him in which he had no pleasure; and work failed him; and poverty descended on him; and his home was broken up. Everything had to be sold for bread; and still there came no work. They went to a poorer house; then to a house poorer still. At last, one evening, they found themselves in a miserable cellar, without fire or food, with nothing even to sit upon except a block of wood. The children were crying for bread. 'Bread, father!' they cried in their hunger—and there was no bread. The cry went into the soul of the man, and filled him with despair. And an evil thought came to him on the wings of the despair; and, yielding to that evil thought, he said to himself, as the young man in the painter's story had said: 'It is more than I can bear; in the morning I shall hide myself from these cries and from this poverty which does not end in the friendly depths of the river'. And in the morning he left his home with that evil thought in his soul. He turned from his wife and children, and set his face towards the river.

It was Sunday. The streets were full of people going to morning service. He turned into a side street to escape them, but there were churchgoers there also; and in a back court in that street a church. Perhaps it was the memory of days when he also went to church; perhaps it was the thought, 'I am going into the presence of God, I will worship

with His people once more before I go'. He never could tell how it came about; but, ill-dressed and unwashed though he was, and with this evil thought in his heart, he turned with the stream of worshippers into that back court, and into the church there, and sat down in a corner, in the shadow, where he could hear without being seen.

Mr. Parsons, of Leeds, was to preach that day; and this happened to be his text: 'When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' And from that text he preached a sermon on deserts, and on putting the God of Israel to the test for the springs in the desert. And among other things he said—and the poor man in the corner thought he looked straight at him as he spoke: 'Oh, my poor brother, thou also art in a desert, in the bleak, bitter desert of poverty. Thou findest it hard to be without money, or work, or bread. Thou thinkest, perhaps, in thy heart, God has set me here for ever; there is no way of escape. Hast thou ever put the God of Israel to the test? What if thou art also in a worse desert—in the desert where the soul has forgotten God? And what if thy poverty be sent to thee to bring God back to thy remembrance, and thyself back to God? Put the God of Israel to the test. Prove Him and see whether He will not turn thy wilderness into a pool, and thy dry land into springs of water.'

It was as if God had spoken. The words of the preacher came into the down-crushed heart of the man, and a good thought began to battle with the evil thought in that heart; and when he came out he turned his back to the river, and set his face once more to his home.

At home there was still the hunger; the cries for bread were there just as before. But the evil thought was gone from the heart of the father, and his soul was groping along the way to God. Taking courage from what he had heard, he said to his wife, 'Liza, suppose we read a bit together?' That brought the tears to her eyes. The Bible he had given her on their wedding day had long since been sold for bread; but there happened to be, on some shelf in that cellar, some leaves of the Old Testament left by those who lived there before; and in these they read. Then, in a little while, when he had found more courage, he said, 'Suppose we try to pray?' and the mother and children knelt down beside him, and he prayed. Out of the depths he cried unto God, 'O God, my father's God, God of my childhood, hear my cry. I have forgotten Thee; and Thou hast brought my children, and my wife, and myself into this wilderness, where there is neither work nor bread. O God, for Jesus' sake, have mercy upon us; and for Thy mercy's sake cause springs to arise in this desert.' Then they all rose from their knees. They were still

hungry, but they began to feel that a little gleam of heaven had shone in upon them. And by and by night came, and blessed sleep, and the cries for bread were stilled.

On the very morning after this poor man had put the God of Israel to the test, and when his soul had turned from all evil thoughts, and from forgetting God, he received a letter from a friend. 'There is a great order,' the letter said, 'come to such a shop. If you go there before ten o'clock you are sure of work.' And in a corner of the letter a half-sovereign was folded up.

And from that moment the heavens grew clear for him and his. Just as Jesus stilled the black, howling tempest on Galilee, and made a calm for the fishermen of old, so He stilled the tempest and made peace and joy for this poor man and his house. The money brought bread to the children; and before the hour named in the letter he was engaged, in the shop it told him of, for a long spell of work. And happiness came back to the home. And by and by it was with that home as in days long past, and God was remembered in it, and God blest His servant at its head; and work came to him without stint, and favour of masters along with the work. More wonderful still, the workman became manager; the manager became master; and—better than all—he and his wife and his children became true servants of God.

'It is never too late to mend.' In whatever wilderness men lose themselves, the way out of it is to remember God. Remember God if days should ever come to thee in which thou hast no pleasure, and He will come to thy help. Remember God if evil thoughts have already come into thy heart, and He will send thoughts of heaven in their stead. Pray to Jesus and He will come into your life and still the tempest and turn trouble into joy.

Better still, let those to whom evil days of the kind I have been describing have never yet come, while it is still morning in your life, remember God. Remembering God will keep evil days away from you for ever. It will keep you young and innocent to the end of your years. And by the mercy of God, it will open the door of heaven for you when your years here have come to an end.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 201.

### THE BRUISED REED

'A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust.'—ISAIAH XLII. 3; MATTHEW XII. 20.

**I. The Young Seeker.**—Our Saviour is most merciful to all seekers, no matter how bad they may have been before they began seeking. Was there ever a more bruised reed than the thief on the cross, or the prodigal son? How kindly the Divine hand lifted them up and healed them! 'When I wished to become a Christian,' a young disciple said, 'I took to reading the Bible. I found many terrible things in it, but they did not discourage me a bit, for they were all against sin, and I was against sin too. The words

about Christ at once gave me all the encouragement that could be. I wondered how any penitent could fail to find hope in the Word of God.

As young seekers are weaker than others, Christ is, if possible, kinder to them. A thoughtful child is easily crushed by the solemn facts of life. You feel very helpless at the mere thought of sin, death, and judgment. But it should fill you with joy that Christ does not crush a bruised reed like you. The two images of our text are as two torches held up over the gospel. Under their united beams you should see the truth clearly. It was an old-world notion that fire was first brought from heaven by Prometheus. That spark of holy desire in your soul certainly came from heaven. I am sure it did not come from the devil, or from the flesh, or from man. Oh, shelter it with both your hands, and do your best to foster it. Take care lest the breath of the corner blow it out. Take care lest it should be quenched by passion. Thank God for it. True, it is like the feeble spark of a flickering lamp; it is hid under earthy ashes, yet it lives. And Christ won't quench it, if you don't, for it is of His own kindling. We get the full meaning of our text only by reading between the lines; the suggestion is far larger than the statement—not the tenth part is told. He will not quench that smoking flax, for why did He kindle it? It owes all its brightness to Him, and to you only its dulness. To raise that spark into a flame is the work on which His heart is set. You are dearer to Him than you are to yourself.

**II. The Young Backslider.**—You are not to think here of sliding backwards on the ice, for in Bible lands they have no ice on which people can slide backwards. But some of their roads lay over slanting, slippery rocks, down which they sometimes slid, and so were seriously wounded. Such 'slippery places' are in your path. Sometimes you forget, and do the very sins you vowed not to do. And when you think rightly about your backsliding, it seems very sinful and mean; and you mourn over your lost honour and your lost purity. You are a bruised reed that has no power to spring erect. The fifty-first Psalm is the portrait of the penitent backslider. David is a broken reed, not wholly broken away or plucked up by the roots, but sunk in the dust before God. He cannot forgive himself for having sinned amid so much light, and against so good a God. Yet how sweetly he sings of God's gentleness in restoring his bleeding soul. Peter is the bruised reed of a backslider in the New Testament. You remember how Christ looked on him in pity, melted his heart, and healed his backsliding. You should notice that hundreds of the most touching scenes in the Bible are for the comfort of backsliders who are really sorry for their sins. An earthly father cannot pardon an unhumiliated child. To pardon were to ruin him. The proud boy would not take the pardon, but would defy and scorn his father the more. And so our Father in heaven cannot pardon His erring children until they repent; but the moment they repent His

compassions flow forth upon them. It is a God-honouring idea that penitents must have two purgatories, one of self-made pain in this world, and one of fire in the world to come; and that great sorrows can take away the guilt of our sins. 'The blood of Jesus Christ—that and nothing else—cleanseth us from all sin.' The bruised reed is not healed by itself, certainly not by its bruises, but by Him who lifts it up. Yet some are more afraid of their remedy than of their disease, and others hope to find their remedy in their disease.

I will give you one specimen of God's way of comforting penitents. 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones' (Isa. LVII. 16). God has two homes: the highest heavens, and the humblest hearts. The part of earth that is nearest heaven is a penitent's heart. Heaven enlarges its border so as to annex the cell of the penitent. Was your soul once a bright well-trimmed lamp, and is it now only a poor smoking wick? With confession of sin bring that wick to the flame of Christ's love, and it will burst into brightness again.

**III. The Young Sufferer.**—Of the millions of bruised reeds in this world the weakest is a little child in sore pain. It melts your heart to see the imploring little eyes as they follow you, while you feel that you can give no help. No one can tell why there is so much suffering in the world; but we know that God has compassion on the weak. We know that Christ, who was bruised for our iniquities, can feel for all bruised ones. We know that the Holy Ghost is called the Comforter, because He is wholly occupied with comforting the distressed. The Bible is filled with the most striking proofs of tenderness towards all sufferers.

The faith of Christ will make you Christ-like towards broken reeds. The suffering and sorrowing will not find you hard and selfish. When you have power over the weak you will use it in Christ's spirit. Yours will not be the rude touch that might make the spark only a heap of black ashes, but you will gladly do what you can to feed the Divine flame where it is, and to kindle it where it is not.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 19.

#### A PAIR OF COMPASSES

'He marketh it out with the compass.'—ISAIAH XLIV. 13.

*Object*—A pair of compasses.

A PAIR of drawing compasses to be of service must be accurate, sharp, and firm. They seem to speak to us quietly in forceful words:—

Firm and pointed, tight and true,  
Telling of good work all may do.

**I. They Suggest Construction.**—In drawing the plans for a house, the architect makes all his accurate measurements with this useful instrument. So God,



who is sometimes called 'The Great Architect,' measures man, for whom He has planned salvation, by mercy and love.

**II. They Suggest Control.**—That a child may keep within control evil passions by the power of Faith and Prayer. Two excellent points.

It is said that when the late Dr. Hall found his temper rising that he would pray, 'Lord, control my temper.'

**III. They Suggest a Fixed Centre.**—If you would make any impression with your compasses, you must find a fixed centre for one arm, and make your mark with the other. Now, take Christ as a centre, and truth as a radius, and you may make worthy impressions of grace and glory for all eternity.

Trust in God,

Fixed on this blissful centre rest.

—A. G. WELER, *Sunday Gleams*, p. 89.

### 'I HAVE REDEEMED THEE'

ISAIAH XLIV, 22.

To redeem is 'to buy back'; and our redemption is a buying us out of bondage. We are 'sold under sin,' and God has bought us back with the precious blood of His well-beloved Son. If you will look at the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, from the twenty-third verse, you will find the law by which the land could be redeemed; or those persons who had waxen poor and sold themselves as bondmen—the law of redemption. I will try and put it into the form of a story.

In a little village amongst the hills of Judea there lived a pious Jew who had two sons. He had trained them in the fear of the Lord, and taught them to love each other very tenderly, so that in his old age they were his comfort and joy. Whilst they were yet young men he died, and they buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers. Then Benjamin, who was the younger son, went forth as a merchant; and Jonathan, his brother, tilled the land of his fathers. It was a pleasant home, with the vines clustering about it, and dark-green olive-trees standing around, and rich corn-fields in the valley below. His flocks of sheep spread over the plain, and everything about him prospered. And indeed there would not have been a happier man in all the land than Jonathan, save that he had one sorrow—his brother Benjamin had gone away to what they thought in those times was almost the end of the earth. He had sailed for Spain, and nothing was heard of him for many years.

Thus things went on until one year there came a great drought in the land of Judea. The fields were parched and barren; the olive-trees withered; the vines died; the flocks perished. All Jonathan's substance melted away like snow in the fierce heat of the sun. Month after month the drought lasted, and when it was over he had to borrow money of a rich neighbour to buy corn for seed. 'He that goeth borrowing, goeth sorrowing,' was what Jonathan soon found out. The next harvest was scarce worth the

gathering, so that Jonathan had to sell his land to his rich neighbour to pay back part of the money. The old home was his no longer. He could come and look at it with a very sad heart. He heard the laugh of strange children playing in the pleasant courts, and the haughty master passed him proudly. He, without home and without friends, could only stand and look in at what had been his father's house. He dared not set foot in it, for he had waxen poor and fallen into decay, and there was none to buy it back for him. So, with a heavy heart, he went trying his hand at one thing after another, and failing in all. All he had was gone, and at last, partly to pay his debt and partly that he himself might live, he had to sell himself as a bondman, a slave to his rich neighbour. His master had to give him food enough to live on, and some rough clothes, and a shed to sleep in. But he belonged to his master. And though the law did not allow him to be treated like slaves have been in many places, yet he was really a slave. He could not please himself, but had to do just what his master told him.

The law said that if he were able *he could redeem himself*. But he toiled all day in the hot sun for his master, and had no strength left to do anything to make a little money to buy himself back. So he could only go on working and sorrowing, without any hope of redeeming himself.

If you look at the chapter again you will see that there was another way in which freedom might come to him. If he had a rich relation—a brother, or a son, or an uncle, or a nephew, or a cousin—that kinsman might come and pay down the price of his redemption and buy him back. But as poor Jonathan thought of that, he only sighed very sadly. He knew if Benjamin were living and could help him, that he would spend his last mite in doing it. But he had not heard of him for many years.

And the Bible tells us that we are 'sold under sin,' that we are 'led captive of the devil at his will'. We are 'without strength' to buy ourselves free. We bring out our golden resolutions and our good desires, but they can't redeem us. We try sometimes to break the bonds, and to run away from our hard master, sin, but we cannot. You have read of slaves running away, and going through all kinds of perils to get their liberty. There is a letter in the Bible that Paul wrote to Philemon about a runaway slave. But who can run away from the cruel master that we serve? Who can run away from his sin? It is like the boy who on a moonlight night thought he saw a ghost, and ran away from it as fast as he could run. The faster he went the faster it went. Whenever he turned it followed, until at last he tripped and fell, and then he found out that it was *his own shadow*. And like our shadows, our sins stick to us. We cannot run away from them. What can we do then? Like Jonathan, we have nobody about us to buy us back. The preacher cannot redeem himself or any of the people. The people cannot redeem each other. Fathers and mothers cannot redeem

their children. Where are we to look for a rich kinsman who is able and willing to redeem us?

Now comes a brighter bit of our story. Far off in the land where he dwelt, Benjamin lived all this time in great prosperity. He was a rich merchant, with very many ships. His house was a palace, and kings and princes were glad to make a friend of him and to borrow large sums of his money. But in it all Benjamin was not happy; the beautiful gardens, the palace, the honour of the great men and the friendship of the princes, could not satisfy him. In his dreams he often saw one thing that greatly troubled him. It was a poor slave working in the fierce heat, toiling in the fields that had belonged to his father, and as he looked at that sad face he saw that it was his own brother. At other times he dreamt of his father's house, with its vines and olive-trees; and there would come one dressed as the master of the house, but it was a stranger to Benjamin. And after him there came a wearied, sorrowful slave, and the merchant saw his brother again. Now, what was all his wealth and splendour, if his poor brother was actually a slave? So leaving all the beauties and luxuries of his home, he got on board one of his ships, and set sail for the land of his fathers. He came across the Mediterranean Sea, tossed by wild storms, and once or twice in great peril because of the cruel pirates that lay along the coast. But he did not mind all that in his eager love to his poor brother. At length he landed, and hastened at once for the old home amongst the hills. There it was before him—just the same. The vine covered it, the olive-trees were there, the merry laugh of little children rang from within. What if it were only a dream after all! And with a trembling voice he inquired for Jonathan. Then a stranger appeared in the door. He was the master. His was the house, and his the vineyards, and his the flocks of sheep.

'Is he living, then, who once lived here?' asked Benjamin, with tears. 'Jonathan, is he living still?' 'Jonathan,' cried the stranger, 'he is living, but—'

'God be praised,' said Benjamin.

'But he is waxen poor and fallen into decay, and he has sold himself to me. You will find him at work in my fields.'

'Just as I dreamed, then!' said Benjamin. 'I will go and see him; but first let me tell you that I am his brother, and I come to redeem him.' And he beckoned to the servants to bring the chest of silver that he had brought with him.

The master could not please himself about it. He *must* take it. The writing was made out, and the money paid. Jonathan was really redeemed. Yet he worked on yonder in the fields as if he had no rich kinsman in all the world.

'Now,' said Benjamin, as soon as that was done, 'I, must redeem the house, the inheritance of my fathers.' Again they made out how much it came to, and again the servants counted the money. Then the

house and land and vineyards belonged to him again.

'And now,' cried Benjamin, rising from the table, 'let me go forth and tell him.' His tears shone with very gladness, as if his heart were too full of joy, and ran over at his eyes. He soon came to a poor slave, just such an one as he had seen in his dreams; and pale, thin, grief-stricken, with a few old clothes tied round him, so that Benjamin could scarcely believe that it was really his brother. Brushing away the tears, and trying to hide his feelings as well as he could, he came up to him. 'Jonathan! do you know me?' The poor bondman looked up for a moment, and sadly shook his head. Hope was dead and buried long ago.

'I am Benjamin, your brother, and I have redeemed you,' and the rich merchant threw his arms round the slave's neck, and kissed him and wept.

'Redeemed me!' cried Jonathan, bewildered. 'You Benjamin—and redeemed me!'

'Yes, my poor brother. God be praised! you are your own again. And your father's house, and the land of your inheritance, it is all yours.'

Then Jonathan lifted himself up like a free man, and blessed his brother Benjamin with all his heart, and kissed him, and wept on his neck and blessed him again, and kept saying it over again and again, 'He has redeemed me. It's done. The price is paid, and I am redeemed.'

That very hour Jonathan was a redeemed man. He left the drudgery of the slave. He flung away the rags, and put on fair robes again. He went back to his father's house, and claimed it as his own. It was all his own, vineyards and olive-yards, fields and flocks, asses and oxen. All his own, for his brother had bought him and all of it back from bondage. His brother had redeemed him.

And so to us, in our slavery to sin there comes the 'tidings of great joy'.

With pitying eyes, the Prince of Peace  
Beheld our helpless grief;  
He saw, and—O amazing love!  
He flew to our relief.

He is born in our midst that He may become a *Kinsman*, a Brother to us all. He comes bringing our ransom price. But He does not bid the angels bring the gold and pearls for our deliverance. He gives Himself a ransom for all. We are redeemed, 'not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ'. And now Jesus comes to us our loving Brother, and He saith, '*I have redeemed thee*'.

*Now do not let us serve sin any more.* Jesus has hought us back from this hard master. It would be no use for the old master to come blustering to Jonathan and ordering him about. Jonathan would cry out, 'Away with you, sir. I have had too much to do with you already. My brother bought me out of your service. He paid the uttermost farthing, and do you think that I shall ever do anything more for you?' We are redeemed that we should no longer

serve sin. Jesus has paid it all. And now, whenever the old master, sin, comes up to claim us, let us get up at once and tell Jesus. It is done, all done. Let us put off the rags of our slavery, and let us put on the robes that belong to us. No more pride and ill-temper and selfishness, but the purple and fine linen of love and gentleness, and the white robe of goodness and purity. Jonathan would never keep the iron ring of the fetter on his wrist; that would be broken off directly; and instead of it, very likely a golden bracelet would be placed there by his brother. Fling away all tokens and belongings of the old service. Let us have our hearts filled with love to our blessed Redeemer, and let us wear the golden ornament that He will give us, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

We may be quite sure that Jonathan would never be able to do enough to show all his love to Benjamin. He could never do enough to please him. So let us love Jesus. We are not our own. We belong to Jesus. He hath redeemed us, and redeemed us with His precious blood. Oh, to love Him with all our heart, and to serve Him with all our strength! We can sing with Zacharias of old: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life'.

And Jesus by His precious blood has not only bought us back from the hard master, sin; *He has bought for us the Father's house too.* He has put us in possession of heaven and all its joys. No wonder that around the throne the thousands of saints sing unto Him their rapturous praise, their new song, saying, 'Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood'.

In a village in Norway there is the figure of a stork carved on the church, and over many of the houses. This is the beautiful story they tell of it: That in that village once there lived a little lad, named Conrad, and his widowed mother. Every summer a stork came near the house, and built its nest close by. Little Conrad and his mother were very kind to the stork. They fed it and petted it so that it got to know them, and would come whenever Conrad whistled to feed out of his hand. Every spring they watched for it, and when it came it seemed as glad to see them as they were to welcome it. Spring and summer chased each other, until Conrad was grown up to be a young man. Then he said he would go to sea, and make money enough to come back and keep his mother in her old age. So he went as a sailor, and set out for a distant land. All went well for many weeks, but one day when they were near to the coast of Africa, a number of cruel pirates swarmed around in their boats, and climbed up the ship's sides. They took possession of the ship, and put the sailors in chains, and afterwards sold them as slaves.

Weeks went by. The widow began to be afraid

about her boy, it was so long since they had heard of him. Ships had come and gone, and brought no tidings of him. At last they gave up all hope of seeing him again, and mourned for him as drowned, and all the village pitied the lonely mother in her grief. As for her, the only thing that seemed to interest her at all was the stork as it came each year. For Conrad's sake she welcomed it and fed it, until the autumn came, and it flew away into the sunny south.

Now it chanced that one day as poor Conrad toiled away at his dreary work in some lonely place, a stork came flying close to him, wheeling about him with great delight. In a moment the scene flashed on him of his home and of his mother and their yearly visitor. Scarcely knowing what he did, he whistled as he used to do to call the bird long ago. To his delight, the stork came at once close to him, as if to be fed. Conrad lifted up his heart to God, and with tears gave thanks that so dear an old friend should have found him there. Day after day he saved what he could from his wretched meal, for the joy of calling the bird to feed at his hand. But Conrad's heart grew sad again as the time came for the bird to fly away to the north. Was it going to his mother's cottage? Was the nest there still that he remembered so well? Was there any to welcome it now and any to feed it? Then it occurred to him, Why, this bird may help me to get away from this vile place. He managed to write on a scrap of paper a line or two, telling where he was, and that he was a slave, and then he tied it firmly around the bird's leg.

The spring came again, and with it the stork. The old widow's eye lit up as it came, reminding her of her lost boy, and tenderly she welcomed it and fed it. And as it took the food from her hand, she caught sight of this strange letter tied at its leg. Curiously removing it, think of her joy when she found that it was from her son! Forth with the tidings she ran to the minister of the little parish to tell him of the news. It quickly spread through the village. They must send and redeem Conrad, was what everybody said. The next Sunday morning the people brought their money to the church, and each gave what he could for the widow's son. Then one was sent to the king to lay the case before him, and to get a ship of war from him that the pirates would not dare to touch. It took a long time in those days to send to Africa, and there to recover Conrad from his slavery. But before the stork had flown, the bells of the village church had rung and all the people rejoiced with a great joy, for the widow's son was redeemed, and was safely at home again in his mother's cottage. Such is the story they tell of the stork in that Norwegian village.

And thus from the bondage of sin and the evil of our hearts we can cry to the King for His help. Prayer is the white-winged bird that can bear our message right up to the Father's house. And an answer shall come. Jesus, the King's Son, comes to



redeem us. But lo! for us *He gives Himself, a ransom for us all!*

To Him let us look with all our hearts. And ever let us please and love Him who in His wonderful love says to each of us, '*I have redeemed thee*'.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 86.

### SELFISHNESS

'I am, and none else beside Me.'—ISAIAH XLVII. 8.

THE human heart is like a garden, in which would grow various kinds of plants, some bearing beautiful fragrant flowers and delicious fruit, others useless, or worse even than useless, giving nothing but poisonous venom.

Amidst the latter, one is so particularly dangerous that I shall describe it to-day, so that you may endeavour to root it out whenever you meet with it. It is a weed which grows as easily as dog's grass, and bears to it a striking resemblance. Its roots spread far under the ground, shooting in all directions, imbibing the most nutritive essences. It is so deep-rooted that even the smallest particle, if left in the earth, soon produces a fresh plant. It grows in any soil, under any climate, and in all seasons. This weed which springs in the heart of man from his earliest childhood, do you know its true name? It is selfishness, that natural tendency of every man to speak and to think only of himself, setting his own pleasure or his own interest above that of others. It was the sin of that proud city of Babylon to which apply the words of my text. It is the root of many other sins, and if I spoke to grown-up persons instead of speaking to children, I might easily prove to them that it is the root of all others, the receptacle which keeps them alive.

One day there rose from the depths of the seas, before the Prophet Daniel, a multitude of beasts, each more hideous the one than the other, so all the crimes, all the follies which take place upon earth, arise from the depths of human selfishness, as from the depths of the seas arose those monsters which the prophet describes in his sublime visions. In struggling against that particular sin, we struggle against all others, nipping them in the bud, and destroying their first cause.

You are all willing, I hope, to fight this terrible enemy of your souls, which I might call the father of sin, and it is but fair that you should be thoroughly armed for the struggle. Selfishness has different shapes and names, and the large family of egotists can be divided into different classes. They are well worth studying, and we shall do so together.

I. I shall speak first of those whose talk is only of themselves, saying, '*I have done this, I know this*'. If you relate a story, they are sure to have another touching themselves, which they will begin before yours is half done. If you say such and such a thing has happened to anybody, they will hasten to relate what has happened to themselves, considering it much more interesting. They never lose an opportunity of speaking about their plans, their business, and their

interests, and they have such a desire to push themselves forward, that they had rather display their faults and their follies than remain silent. Hardly have you begun speaking on a subject than they interrupt you with, '*Just the same thing happened to me*', or, '*It is just the same with me*'; and on they go, speaking of that precious self, which is always uppermost in their thoughts. If you have read an interesting book, they are sure to have read one still more interesting. If you have enjoyed your walk, do not attempt to describe it, their own is sure to have been pleasanter. Do you happen to be in trouble, why, they have troubles of their own also; how came you to forget them, and to speak of anything else?

I hope that you perceive all the foolishness of that sort of selfishness which has given birth to the word 'egotism'. Watch carefully over yourselves, and when you talk, avoid the pronouns of the first person. They have been the cause of more faults than many a difficult grammatical rule. It is the frequent use made of them by some people that has inspired the well-known saying, '*Self is odious*'; and, in fact, a man who can talk of nothing but himself, is soon unbearable, everybody avoids him, and he is left alone with that precious self. Think and speak of yourselves as little as possible; it is a rule worth gold.

II. I shall now say a few words about another class of egotists—about those who are so attached to their property, that they rarely give or even lend anything. I can hardly call them stingy, as they are always ready to spend for themselves, and yet, as I have already said, if you ask them to give or to lend anything, they will be almost unable to do so. That sort of selfishness is frequently met with, both amongst young and old, rich and poor. Look at this little girl, who holds her doll so tightly; do you think she is afraid that any one should take it from her? No, but she is unwilling to lend it to her sister. Those small rosy hands which hold the doll are selfish hands! And that boy, who has just received from his godfather a box full of sweetmeats, why is he sitting alone in a corner? Look at him, dipping his hand over and over again in his box, hastening to eat his sweetmeats, so that there may be none left when his mamma shall ask him to share them with others! Is he not selfish? And that well-dressed young gentleman who has evidently been eating a good breakfast at home, and who with his well-filled purse passes by the poor little beggar boy, who stands barefooted, shivering, and hungry, without giving him a penny, what do you think of him? The thought may have struck him that it would be right to do so, for the boy had followed him, whispering, '*Oh, give me a penny, please! I am so hungry*'. But with that penny our young gentleman will buy a spinning top for himself, and he hastens away, hoping, perhaps, to hush the inward voice which cries to him, '*Egotist, egotist*'.

III. We shall now speak of those egotists who, secluding themselves from society, indifferent to others, live exclusively for themselves. Requiring

nothing but peace and quiet, they are only happy as long as they are left undisturbed in their selfish solitude, neither caring nor troubling themselves about what happens around them. Letting the world go its own way, they see with an equally indifferent eye the form of government, be it republic or monarchy, the welfare of the working classes, the progress of instruction and of morality. Peaceful and happy in the pleasant retreat they have chosen, they have settled their lives according to their tastes, doing the same thing every day, and at the same hour. Nobody would ever think of asking them anything, or of meddling in their affairs, no more than they meddle in those of others, and yet they consider themselves supremely happy.

IV. I shall say a few words before finishing of a fourth class of egotists. I allude to those who, though requiring a great deal, and setting their tastes, their habits, and their interests above those of all others, are nevertheless rarely satisfied. Do they ever show any consideration for others? No, indeed; and it is one of the characteristics of their selfishness, to give little and to require a great deal. I am sorry to say it is a common failing with children. They take it for granted that they are to have kind parents to watch and care for them, and even to give them from time to time an unexpected treat; but do they show in return the regard and the consideration which their parents have every right to expect? Do they never lose an opportunity of proving their gratitude? How many children are there whose first thought in the morning is, 'What can I do to-day to please my father or my mother? How could I make their life easier or pleasanter?' It is a mistake too common amongst men, that the less they give and the more they get, the happier they are, and it is only in promoting the happiness of others that we can secure our own. Not only will sacrifice purify your souls, but it will make you all the richer in the end.—A. DECOFFER, *Sermons for Children*, p. 82.

### GARDEN OF THE LORD

ISAIAH LI. 3.

'AND He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord.' This was a real, definite, precious promise to Israel, to those who sought, followed, and obeyed the Lord, and such is the Lord's promise to all who in like manner trust Him. He will make our hearts and lives 'The garden of the Lord'. If this is to be our experience whether we are adults or children, five things must be done.

I. **There are Weeds to be Removed—Nature.**—Sin, selfishness, falsehood, and disobedience are all weeds. But Jesus can take them all away. Ask Him! (1 John i. 7).

II. **There is Life to be Nourished—Grace.**—Life must first be put into the garden, and then nourished. The seed sown, watered, and cared for. Life must first be put in the heart by the Holy Spirit and then

nourished by the Word. Jesus is the Life (1 John v. 11, 12).

III. **There are Flowers to be Cultivated—Beauty.**—Flowers are earth's ornaments of brightness and joy. So are the virtues of the Christian life—humility, meekness, kindness, and charity (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2).

IV. **There are Fruits to be Gathered—Blessing.**—Fruit is the evidence of life, and the end of toil and labour. So the fruit of grace in the heart is love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. v. 22).

V. **There are Blessings to be Enjoyed—Reward.**—The joy of possession, the interests of life and growth, fellowship in work, and the gladness of fruit and reward. An earnest, happy Christian life gives joy to God (Zeph. iii. 17). God is the Owner, the Planter, the Gardener, and will enjoy the fruits of His own love for ever, and we are allowed to share the joy and glory with Him.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 52.

### 'WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED'

ISAIAH LIHI. 5.

THE wonderful thing about this chapter is that it tells the story of Christ's life and death as if the person telling it had been living when Christ lived. And yet it was written seven hundred years before Jesus was born.

Seven hundred years before the Saviour came God told Isaiah of His coming, and told him all He was to suffer.

Then Matthew and others wrote it down after He came.

There are many things in this chapter which you might try to find out.

There is the name of Christ; there is a portrait of Christ; there is an account of the birth of Christ; there is a description of the way people spoke about Christ; and there is the death of Christ, and His burial, and His future glory.

But it is only one thing of all the things in the chapter I am going to try to make plain to you.

It is said here that *Jesus died for us*. It is also said that it is *by His dying for us that you and I are to be made good*.

'With His stripes we are healed.'

Now I think almost every child understands this much: that *Jesus did not deserve to die*. If it had not been for our sakes, He need not have died. He died to save us from death and from being condemned for our sins by God at the judgment day.

For this purpose God laid *on Him* the iniquity of us all.

But what you do not know so well is that it is *by His dying for us that we are to be made good*.

'With His stripes we are healed.'

Now try to listen. It is a hard thing to understand, but it is an easy thing to *feel*. And what I am going to relate may help to make this plain to you.

In a particular district of France there is a school for poor boys who have neither father nor mother to care for them, and who run homeless about the streets.

It is a very good school, and the boys who enter it are cared for and helped to become good men.

But sometimes bad boys get in, and boys who will not try to be better. A boy of this sort one day stabbed another in the arm with a knife.

Now in that school they have two very wonderful rules: First. Bad boys, when they do mischief, are tried by the scholars, not by the masters. And the sentence the other boys passed on this cruel lad was that he should be kept three weeks in a dark cell, and fed on bread and water.

Second. But in this school substitutes are allowed in punishments. Any boy may come forward and say, I will bear the punishment to which an evil-doer has been sentenced.

And when the sentence was pronounced, the question was asked whether any boy was willing to bear this punishment.

And to the surprise of all the school the boy whose arm had been stabbed stepped forward and said, 'I will bear it in his stead'.

And that was agreed to, but the master said, 'The criminal must take the bread and water to the cell'.

And the boy whose arm had been stabbed went into the cell to bear the punishment. And the boy who stabbed him carried the bread and water three times a day to the cell.

He went through his task six days. But then he broke down; three times every day to see the pale face of the boy he had stabbed in prison for him made him see how cruel he had been, and he came to the master and insisted on bearing the rest of the punishment himself.

So Christ's sufferings show us that it was the sin of the world which made Jesus willing to die. 'And He died for us.'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 76.

#### 'WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND'

ISAIAH LV. 6.

'SEEK,' or come to, 'The Lord *while He may be found.*'

'Call upon,' or come to, 'The Lord *while He is near.*'

What are we to understand by such words?

Is God only *sometimes* to be found by those who seek Him?

Is God only *sometimes* near when we call?

Now I really do not know that I can make this plain to you. But the truth is—there is a time when God is to be found.

And then there is a time when He is not to be found.

There is a time when He is near.

Then—after that—there is a time when He is not near.

At one of the New York Prayer Meetings a young

school rose up and said, 'Seek the Lord now—now, while He may be found.'

'I had a shipmate who was always going to begin to seek the Lord, and always putting it off. He really meant to begin some day. But at Panama he took the marsh fever. "Oh, Ned," I said to him on his sick-bed, "seek the Lord now." "'Tis too late now," said Ned, and died.'

And continuing, he said:—

'And shall I tell you how I myself was brought to know that there is a time when He will not be found?

'My mother pled with me to give myself to Christ, but I always said, "Time enough yet, mother".'

'But one Sunday I heard my mother asking a neighbour's daughter to come with her to church. She said, "I cannot go till next Sunday, when I shall have my new bonnet".'

'And next Sunday she was in her grave.'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 96.

#### GREEDY DOGS

'Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough.'—

ISAIAH LVI. 11.

I. 'GREEDY dogs' always want the best bits for themselves. They like to fare better than all the rest. They will quarrel with any cat or dog or man who tries to filch their dainties. They will even steal another's food if it looks better than their own. Is not that exactly like some boys and girls? I won't tell you their names; but I will tell you of some of the things they do. At a party they always scramble for the best places; at dinner they always cry out for the best bits. They want their pudding to be all plums, and their cake all currants. If you offer them an apple—they choose the largest on the plate; a toy—they choose the very prettiest; a book—they choose the handsomest and best. They never leave the best for anyone else. Their greediness makes them try to grab all the good things for themselves. Very small children may be forgiven their selfishness. They are not old enough to know better. They will cry for the moon, and try to grasp everything in their tiny hands. But as we grow older we ought to grow wiser, and learn to be better than the 'greedy dogs'. We cannot all have the best things, and we should be willing to give other people a turn. It is said of Frederick Denison Maurice, who was a great preacher and teacher, that his sweet disposition was conspicuous even in his childhood. Generosity seemed as natural to him as selfishness to other children. One day, when he was five years old, he came into the family room with a biscuit in one hand and a flower in the other. A gentleman who was present said to Frederick's mother, 'Now we will see what he likes best; children always give up what they least care for'. Then turning to the child, he said, 'Frederick, which will you give me—the flower or the biscuit?' 'Choose which you like,' answered the boy, holding out both his hands. That was a right and noble spirit. He was willing that another should choose



the best; he was not a 'greedy dog,' trying to keep the nicest things for himself, and I want you to be generous boys and girls after that fashion.

II. 'Greedy dogs' always keep their good things to themselves. Their motto seems to be 'Get all you can, and keep all you can'. Did you ever notice a dog with a bone? He looks round every second with a suspicious growl; and if another dog approaches, you don't find him offering to go shares. Not he! He snarls, and shows his teeth, and looks very vicious, and the sooner the new-comer disappears the better it is for him. He will get a bite of the wrong sort if he is not quick. We do not blame dogs for acting so, 'it is their nature'; but boys and girls should know better and do better. They should be like King Alfred. The story tells how often he was in sore straits when pursued by the Danes, and at one time was brought so low that he and the queen had only a single loaf of bread. That day a poor man came and knocked at the door and asked for charity. 'We have only got one loaf; it is not enough for ourselves,' said the queen. But King Alfred replied, 'Give him half of it; he is a Christian'. And they gave him half. How much nobler it is to go shares, like the king, than to stick to what you have got, like the dog! Then be not dog-like, but king-like, and make it a rule to go shares with your pleasures and comforts and possessions. Don't keep them all to yourselves, but give some of them away. Don't be greedy, but generous.

III. 'Greedy dogs' are very careless of the needs of others. As our text goes on to say, 'They all look to their own way, every one for his own gain'. They never put themselves out to help the needy. So, too, selfish men and women are absorbed in their own aims and pursuits, and deaf to the cry, blind to the sorrow, regardless of the needs of their less fortunate brethren. They make 'Take care of No 1' their ruling principle in life. So long as they prosper, they care not who goes to the wall. But this is both cruel and shameful. It is only worthy of 'greedy dogs,' and is a disgrace to any man or woman, boy or girl. Jesus Christ teaches us to give up our own pleasure, to sacrifice our own ease, to set aside our own desires, and by so doing we can help or bless another. A gentleman was waiting one evening outside the railway station at Leeds, when a ragged, dirty boy came up to him, with 'Buy an evening paper, sir. Please do, good gentleman. Only seven left, and they's all my profit.' He had a right honest face, but he was ragged and wet, and the gentleman said, 'Why, boy, you have no cap on this rainy night. Have you no cap to wear?' 'Yes, sir,' was the reply, 'I've got a cap, but I lent it to my sister.' 'Where is she?' 'Over there, sir, in that old doorway, waiting till I sell out.' 'But she has no cap on, my lad; where is it?' 'Oh, sir, she's got no boots or stockings, so I told her to put her feet inside my cap to keep 'em warm, and prevent her ketchin' a cold. Have a paper, sir, please: 'twouldn't hurt you to buy the lot.' You may be sure he did not plead in vain. What a brave,

generous hero he was! He did not think of himself at all; he only thought of his little sister; and he was quite willing to stand bareheaded in the pouring rain so that her feet might be kept cosy and warm. What a happy world this would be if all were like him!

Jesus Christ thought not of 'self' when He left heaven for earth, and lived, toiled, and died for poor and sinful men. His heart was full of love, and He laid down His life for the sake of others. Then let us pray and strive to be like Him. It is shameful to be 'greedy dogs'. It is Christlike to be unselfish, generous, and loving; nor could higher praise be given.—G. HOWARD JAMES, *Talks to Young Folk*, p. 7.

## A WATERED GARDEN

'Thou shalt be like a watered garden.'—ISAIAH LVIII. 11.

I. What a Watered Garden is Like.—Good amusement for children, 'Bible Pictures'. Some one draws a picture *in words* out of Bible, the rest guess. Let me draw one now and see if you can guess it.

[A land, pleasant but wild. In all directions things seem left to themselves. Trees, shrubs, grass, all growing wild and untended. In this wilderness a solitary man; he seems to be waiting—wondering how he came there. I look round, and off, in the east, where the sun rose not so long ago, *some one* seems to be at work; space is being cleared, new trees and shrubs planted, order taking the place of confusion. Presently the worker comes to the man out in the wilderness, and leads him to the place which he has planted. As we go with him we see it is a pleasant garden; in it is every tree pleasant to sight and good for food; in all directions it is watered by rivers. Here the man is settled as the gardener; told to dress it, and to keep it.]

There is the picture. Now what garden? Who planted it? Who had to keep it? How was it watered? (Gen. 11. 8-15.) That was the most beautiful garden that ever was seen; *planted* by God, well watered, and with Adam as the gardener. The gardener, too, had God to teach him how to do his work—how to train and dress the plants properly, and how to get them well watered.

So then this garden, and the same is true of other *flourishing* gardens, was *well planted, well watered, and well looked after*.

II. How we may be Like Watered Gardens.—Our hearts are gardens.

1. *God has planted them.*

What with? The seeds of graces, love, faith, hope, patience, gentleness, humility. May come up in beautiful flowers and fruits. [*May illustrate, by anecdote or otherwise, the character of these flowers and fruits of the Spirit.*]

2. *The Holy Spirit is at hand to water them* (cf. John vii. 37-39).

Like a beautiful river—the river of the Water of Life—proceeding out from under God's throne, and flowing down through the streets of the city of God (Rev. xxii. 1), always ready for use (Rev. xxii. 17).

3. *We are the gardeners who have to look after them.*

God will teach us (*see the words before our text*); then under His teaching we have—

(1) *To dress.* See that the plants get all the help they want, and are properly watered. Remember graces grow by exercise.

(2) *To keep,* i.e. guard, clear off evil thoughts and bad habits, as gardener clears off slugs and snails, and guards against birds who steal the seeds.

Our best garden-tool is prayer; that, at any rate, is the handle which fits all tools.

### III. If not Like Watered Gardens, What Then ?

—Our hearts, planted by God, Holy Spirit at hand to water God's plants; if the plants are withering, or the seeds not coming up, whose fault must it be? Isaiah tells us about something of the kind. [*Picture out from Isa. v. 5, 6.*] Because the gardener would neglect his garden, it had to be made a wilderness again, and not even the rain allowed to water it! Well to remember what may happen if we are not watchful. How are *you* keeping your garden? Are God's flowers blowing there, and His fruits ripening as they should do?—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 77.

### THE LORD'S REMEMBRANCERS, AND GOING THROUGH THE GATES

'Ye that make mention of the Lord ("the Lord's Remembrancers"), keep not silence.

'And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

'Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.'—ISAIAH LXII. 6, 7, 10.

THESE may appear at first sight strange words.

They are a call made to some persons, named 'the Lord's Remembrancers'. And what do you think they are asked to do? It seems a bold demand. 'To give the Great God no rest till He grants a request! When you are very anxious to get anything from your father or mother, you give them 'no rest' till you obtain it. What is it, then, these Pleaders beseech God so earnestly about? It is about Jerusalem: and to 'make Jerusalem a praise in the earth'.

The verses bring before us three pictures. They give us three representations of *Jerusalem*. Let me speak about each of these.

I. The first picture is that of **The Captive Jews Seated Mournfully 'by the Rivers of Babylon'**.—I spoke to you so very lately, and at length, on this very topic, that I shall not dwell upon it now. Let me just say, that at the very time these exiles—fathers and mothers and children—were saying through their tears, 'When, oh when, shall we be back again to our own loved Jerusalem?' God answers their prayer. He says to them in this beautiful chapter of Isaiah, 'You shall all once more return, and that very soon'. He tells them He Himself loves *Jerusalem* so much, that He calls it His 'crown of glory':

as if that far-off city, though in ruins, with its walls all battered and broken, was to Ilim like a sparkling diadem which He delighted to wear. He tells them that its tumbled-down walls will be rebuilt: its fallen Temple restored; and the holy incense ascend again from its altars. He tells them also (in ver. 10) that the time is coming when Babylon's great gates of brass would be thrown open, and these 'Remembrancers' spoken of in the text—God's own servants—the prophets of the Captivity—would be heard joyfully saying, "'Go through, go through the gates!' Take out all these huge stones to make a passage for the beasts of burden: make straight the roads; level the desert which lies between, and prepare a pathway for the Lord's ransomed ones.' The little children too, if they cannot lend a helping hand in removing the piles of rock and the desert stones, can at least join the happy company, and share the joyful prospect of being within the gates of Jerusalem once more: for in our former text on this same subject we are told that 'the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof' (Zech. vii. 5).

II. The second picture is **The Jerusalem of the Future**.—At this day, as you all know, Jerusalem (just as it was in the time of which I have been speaking) is poor and downtrodden. Its ancient renown and beauty and glory are gone. (Oh, how gone!) When I was there, I could hardly bear to walk along its filthy, gloomy lanes and streets. Raggedness and beggary and desolation reign *within* the walls, the howl of the leper is heard *without*; a barren country around. 'Where,' I asked in vain, 'are the old joyous vineyards? Where the fat oliveyards? Where the bleating sheepfolds? Where, above all, the happy children in the Temple crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David"?'

But this chapter of the prophet tells me there is a day coming when these walls and houses are to be all restored; when (ver. 4) that 'forsaken one' shall be called *Hephzibah* (i.e. 'delighted in her'), and that 'desolate one' will be called *Beulah* (i.e. 'married'); when the spectacle shall be no longer witnessed of the Jew, as I have seen him, beating his forehead against the 'wailing-wall' of his ancient Temple; and saying in the bitterness of his heart, 'How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people?'

The nation of Israel are now scattered throughout the wide world—a hissing and a byword and a proverb among the nations'. In the first picture of our text we behold them hanging their harps on the willows of the Euphrates. There is now scarce a river in all the world on whose banks their broken harps may not be seen, and their wandering feet may not be found, and their wailing cry may not be heard: the Thames, the Tiber, the Danube, the Nile, the Ganges. But the day is coming when they too shall listen, as their forefathers did, to the words, 'Go through, go through the gates!' When the darkness that has for ages settled over that once

'delightful land' will be driven away; and as it is said in the opening verse of this same chapter, 'the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth'.

III. The third picture is the glory, not of Jerusalem the capital of Palestine, but **The Glory of the Spiritual Jerusalem**, the Church of Christ throughout all the world: and that, more especially in days yet to come.

This glory of the Church to which Isaiah refers, was so far displayed at the first advent of Jesus. The world had been for ages in thick darkness; but when He was born, angels could sing over it, 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!' The salvation which the Saviour brought to our earth was like a burning lamp in a midnight of gloom (ver. 1).

Truer and better still will all this be, in happy days yet to dawn, when heathen lands now in the shadow of death, shall see a glorious light; when heathen portals, now closed and barred against the Prince of Peace, shall be thrown open; and the cry shall be heard and answered as it has never been before, 'Go through, go through the gates!' 'Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in' (Isa. xxvi. 2). The cry, as foretold in this chapter, shall be carried from kingdom to kingdom and from shore to shore, 'Behold thy salvation cometh' (ver. 11).

Now, we should all *pray* for this. We are told here to do so. What are Isaiah's own words? Listen again to them, 'Ye that make mention of the Lord' (or, as I have already adopted the rendering given in the margin of your Bibles, 'Ye who are the Lord's Remembrancers').

To whom does this name apply? Well. God may have more special 'Remembrancers': His prophets of old; His ministers now. But, you too can have part in that glorious and honoured word and work! Yes, wonderful as it may seem, the youngest here can be a 'Remembrancer'; the youngest here can *pray*.

What a beautiful name for a child—'the Lord's Remembrancer!' that is, 'one who keeps God in mind of His promise'. Your earthly father has promised to do some kind act for you. You come and seat yourself on his knee and remind him of it; so God, our Heavenly Father, has promised glorious things to His Church. You remind Him of His sure and faithful word. 'Ye (says the prophet) who are "the reminders of God," keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish—and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth!'

Happy time! and how well worth praying for! When a great multitude, pointing to the now closed gates of the world, shall be heard saying, 'Go through, go through!' When rejoicing millions shall sing the old Hosanna of the Temple children, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!' 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion, for He hath strengthened the bars of

thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee!' (Ps. cxlvii. 12, 13). Yes, Jesus shall then be welcomed as Prince of Peace; and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 313.

### THOUGHTFUL HELPFULNESS

'Gather out the stones.'—ISAIAH LXII. 10.

MANY years ago, when the Jews were in captivity away from their own land across the Asiatic desert, and they had lost heart, fearing that they would never return to their homes again, one brave man kept his courage strong, and he said to his companions: 'Oh, friends, better days are coming; God will take us home again; we are not going to remain here, exiles and slaves, for ever. I see plainly a vision of us all crossing the desert.' And in this chapter you have his word-painting as plainly as painter could put it on his canvas. As we read these verses, we see the navies doing hard work, digging up the road through the desert; and there are the rest of the people preparing and smoothing the way; and there are the children. What are *they* doing? Ah! that is the text—Gathering out the stones. The strong men doing all the hard work, and the little children gathering out the stones.

Those of you who ride bicycles know what a nuisance stones can be. And the little child who gathers the stones out of the way does a good turn for all who travel. Now, what are the little helps you can render? I cannot tell you one-millionth part as well as you know yourself. Sometimes there is baby to mind because mother is tired. Sometimes there is a button to sew on. Sometimes there is orange peel to be taken off the side walk, lest some one should trip. Sometimes there is peace to be made between two of your school-fellows. Sometimes your brother comes home from school and says, 'Oh, this work is so hard; I can never, never get through it'; and you say, 'Oh, don't be a cry-baby; here, let me help you'. That is gathering out the stones.

I know a tiny little girl to whom a lady visitor once said, 'When you grow up you'll be a great help and comfort to mother, won't you?' And she piped up with, 'Please, I am a help and a comfort to mother now'. 'What! Such a midget as you?' 'Yes, I am.' And away she went to find the doll that she had not seen for an hour; the poor thing had tumbled off the sofa, so she undressed him, put on his bed-gown, tied a rag round his damaged head, and just as she had tucked him under the sheet, mother came in looking very tired, sat down and took up her sewing as if it were a tiresome duty. And her little girl jumped up and kissed her on both cheeks, and cried, 'Mother, I do love you so!' And her mother replied softly, 'My little darling, what a comfort you are!' And all the clouds were helped away.

I wonder if all of you know that *brother* means *he who helps*, and *sister* means *she who pleases and comforts*?



I wonder if you can feel the beauty that there is in those sad lines written by a lady :—

So many gods, so many creeds,  
So many paths that wind and wind ;  
While just the art of being kind  
Is all the sad world needs.

I do not want to stand here in this pulpit and say to you in the pews, 'Always be trying to take stones out of people's ways'. I do not think anybody in the world is more disagreeable than a person irritatingly and aggressively meddling, who is always getting in the way through trying to help when he cannot really give any help.

In a railway carriage a most obliging man, when the train stopped and a rough-and-tumble boy got out, saw a bundle where the boy had been sitting, and called out, 'Take your bundle with you ; don't leave it here'. And he threw it out of the window. A good lady who was with him, said, 'Ah, young man, what are you doing? Those are my best "going-to-meeting" clothes.' You see, he had been trying to help, but it was a pity he had not thought a little more carefully first.

Children sometimes try to help without thought. Then they are a great nuisance. When the opportunity comes, do the best you can. Take the stone out of the way, but be very sure that some one has not put it there for some good purpose that you don't understand. Perhaps there is a meaning in the stone being there which you do not understand. Think ; use your brain as well as your heart.

A very good man died a little time ago, and a lady who loved him very much was telling her child how their dear friend was gone to heaven. She replied, 'Oh, mother, how happy the angels must be to have him with them!'—B. J. SNELL, *The Good Father*, p. 137.

### GOD OUR MOTHER

'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'  
—ISAIAH LXVI. 13.

How does a mother comfort? And how does the Lord comfort like a mother?

**I. The Lord Comforts, like a Mother, by His Presence.**—In the family circle, and especially when the children are young, the mother is always at hand. She is the queen of the home. The house is not itself—it feels dull and cold—when she is absent from it. Her very presence is a comfort and a joy to her children.

It is so also with God. He is 'not far from every one of us, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being'. And although our sins have separated between us and God, and put us 'far off' from Him, we have been 'made nigh by the blood of Christ'. The Lord has promised never to leave nor forsake those who are His sons by faith in Jesus.

**II. The Lord Comforts, like a Mother, by His Words.**—A child's first teacher is his mother. He

receives from her lips his earliest and most sacred lessons about the most important of all subjects, God, and life, and duty. Her voice is sweet music in his ears. When at any time the child is discouraged, his mother's words are an effectual comfort to him. When he has been naughty, her remonstrances bring him to penitence ; while her counsels help him to be good, and to resolve to follow the right. Many a grown young man, amid the strong temptations of city life, has been kept from falling into sin by the memory of his mother taking his hand in hers when he was a little child, and teaching him to say on his knees before her, 'Our Father which art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'.

Now God comforts His people by His words, just like a mother. How often, in Bible times, when He showed Himself to His saints, and they were troubled, did He gently say to them, 'Fear not!' 'Fear not, Abram'; 'Fear not, Zacharias'; 'Fear not, Mary'; 'Fear not ye'. And still, when we go to the Lord in prayer, and confess our sins to Him, or tell Him our troubles, He speaks to our hearts comfortable words, such as these: 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness'. Holy Scripture is the Word of God; and if we choose it for our companion, we shall have His voice always in our ears. 'When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou wakest, it shall talk with thee.'

**III. The Lord Comforts, like a Mother, by His Sympathy.**—A child speaks out all his joys and sorrows without reserve to his mother. He takes home the prize-books which he receives at school, and places them in her hands, and finds the chief reward of his diligence in her approving smile. He turns to her too, very promptly and earnestly, in all his pain and weariness. We remember the little son of the Shunammite lady, who was carried home from the harvest-field ill with sunstroke: 'He sat on his mother's knees till noon, and then died'. We remember also the woman of Canaan in the New Testament, who came to the Lord Jesus seeking help for her demoniac daughter: her prayer was, 'Have mercy on me,' for, in her yearning motherly sympathy, she made her child's sorrow entirely her own.

Such also is the love and tenderness of God our Mother. The comfort which He imparts is healing and gladdening. His love is a brooding love. As the mother eagle, when she is teaching her young ones to fly, 'taketh them, beareth them on her wings,' and receives them on her outstretched pinions when their own strength fails, so does the Lord with His people. And He is ready to love all men with a mother's love, and to care for all with a mother's tenderness.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 284.

# JEREMIAH

## THE MOUSE-EAR

### JEREMIAH I.

THERE is nothing which people, both old and young, take so long to learn as the kind of work which is best worth doing for God.

What most people want to be doing is some great thing—something that prophets, and apostles, or great heroes and heroines have done. But a little thing, a common everyday thing, such a thing as we require to do out of everybody's sight, in our daily duties, at the fireside, or in the school—that seems a poor kind of work to be called to do. Naaman's servants saw that thought in their master's face when he refused to go and wash in Jordan. 'Master,' they said, 'if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?' It took some time to bring him to reason, and make him see that the little thing he was bid to do was the best thing he could do.

But there are people of a quite different sort, people who shrink away from great work—even from the thought of great work—humble people who have poor ideas of themselves, and never aspire to do great things. People of this sort say, 'Great things are not for us to do'. It was something like that Jeremiah said when God asked him to go and speak for Him to his fellow-men. 'Ah, Lord God!' he said, 'I am but a child.'

If Jeremiah had been older, or better acquainted with God's word, it would not have seemed to him so difficult. But when God called him, and bade him go forth and speak to men about heaven, his heart failed him. 'Ah, Lord God!' he said, 'I cannot be of use to Thee. I am not old enough, nor wise enough, nor learned enough—I am just a child.'

Now that just expresses what many young people and children feel, when they are asked to do work for God: 'What can we do? We are not old enough, nor strong enough, nor rich enough, nor grand enough.' Walter Crosby, the pilot's son, had a very tender heart. And when he went along the street to his school and saw very poor people ill-dressed, or cold, or begging, he would say to himself: 'I wish I were a King, or an Earl, or a Lord Mayor, or a Bishop, I would buy bread and clothes for these poor people. I would build houses for them, and make them glad all the days of their life. But what can I do? I am only a boy, and I have nothing to give.' And there was Eleanor Moseley. She saw sick people at her father's door every day. And sometimes she would be sorry for them. And sometimes she wished she were able to help them. But always she ended by

saying to herself: 'Oh, that I were a queen or a duchess! I would ride about in my carriage and visit the sick every day, and all the day long. And I would say to them, "I am your sister and I love you—I love you—I love you"'. But what can I do? I am only Eleanor Moseley. And I am still a child.'

I do not think that those who speak in that way are unwilling to work. On the contrary, they are very willing, nay eager, to work. They are looking forward to a time when they shall be workers for God. But it is not that time yet. It is not that time for a long while yet. They are not able just yet. They are too young, or too humble, or too poor as yet. They cry just as Jeremiah did, 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child'.

It is to young people who feel in that way I am going to speak to-day. I am going to mention some things—real work for God—which you are not too young to do. And I will begin, as I intend to end, by saying that you are not too young to make beautiful the home you live in.

I have just returned from a place where I lived many years and made many friends. Among these friends was one who was very little, far less than Eleanor Moseley, or Walter Crosby, or you. My friend was only a little flower. Where I first met with it the people call it 'Mouse-Ear,' because the green leaf is shaped like a mouse's ear. It has a most lovely little flower—five tiny petals, or flower-leaves, pale blue, or sometimes pink and blue, arranged in a circle. These tiny petals, where they join, surround a bright yellow cup. And in that cup, standing straight up in the centre, is a slender spear of light green, and on the point of that a very little ball of red. I know many beautiful flowers. I know the tall hollyhock, that stands up in our gardens in the fall of the year, like Aaron's rod that budded. I know the peony, that in the early summer puts on a finer velvet than a queen's. And there is my lady the lily, and my lord the rose; and pansies and pinks and daffodils. I know them all, and how fair they are, and how bare our gardens would be without them. But among them all, I do not know one more beautiful, out and out, than my little friend, the mouse-ear.

It was a very humble place in which I first saw my friend. It was on the roadside, under the hollow of a hedge, between the rain-drop of the hedge and the gutter which the rain-water makes on the road. Not a very sightly place—a place where snails creep and nettles grow, and the sun does not often shine. There shone the mouse-ear. There, after many years, I found it shining still. Morning and evening, from early

summer till late harvest, without tiring, without murmuring, it shines on, like a little star in the shadow of the hedge, like the eye of a blessed angel, making beautiful the dwelling-place where God has planted it. In many another place as lonely, as humble, and as infested with shadow, I have found my flower since then. And many a long talk the mouse-ear and I have had together. Many a time, lying on a green bank, I have laid my ear close to it to hear what it said. And many and many a time it spoke a blessed word to me. And this is what it always said: 'Oh, my friend, make the place where God has put you beautiful. If it be but a tent in the desert, make it beautiful. If it be only a cottage in a lonely street, or an attic room in a cottage, or a fireside, or a bench in a workshop, or a berth in a ship, or a seat in a school, or a place on your mother's knee, or a place in her heart, make it beautiful. And the sadder, the darker, the poorer the place is, be the more eager to make it beautiful. If it were as poor and lonely a place as you think mine to be—a place on a roadside, where no fine people come with nobody to look at you but butterflies and sparrows and blades of grass, make it beautiful. And go on and ever on making it more and more beautiful. That is your work and mine in the world.'

Always, when I came away from listening to the mouse-ear, it came into my mind that that was what Christ did when He was upon the earth—that is what the angels do in heaven—that is what redeemed spirits are doing in God's presence. They are just making beautiful the place they dwell in. The heart of the mouse-ear's life and the heart of the heart of heaven are in this the same. Its desire is to fill the home with beauty and love. And I am sure, the poorer the home, if you could think of angels and saints as poor, the greater their desire would be to make it beautiful.

What place could be drearier and more lonely than that sea-angel, Grace Darling, filled! A lighthouse on a low reef of rocks was her home. Looking landward on clear days, she could see Bamborough, St. Abb's Head, Holy Island, and the mouth of the Tweed. Looking seaward, there were the long shoreless stretches of the Northern Ocean. Waves tumbling in upon the low-set rocks; waves leaping up in time of storm like wild horses; waves in peace; waves in tumult; waves covered with shadow and black with night; waves glancing with sunlight and bright as burnished silver! All around her, day after day, it was only this, only the world of waves, which Grace Darling saw. What she heard was the crying of sea-birds and storms. And when winter came, its awful voices sounded like calls of terror around the lonely lighthouse, on the Fern Islands where it was built. Yet there, amid that world of waves, this brave girl made beautiful the place where God appointed her to dwell.

It was early in the month of September more than twenty years ago. The winter storms had begun early that year. One morning, after a wild night,

Grace Darling heard human voices mingling with the voices of the storm. And going out, she saw a vessel on the rocks of the farthest island. What was she that she should bestir herself at such a time? A feeble girl, with the seeds of an early death at work on her already! But she roused her father and pointed out the wreck. Were the human beings clinging to it to be allowed to perish? The old man saw no help for them. He shrank from the entreaty of his daughter to go out to them. It seemed to him certain death to venture on such a sea. The brave girl leaped into the boat of the lighthouse and would go alone; and then the old man's courage was roused. And so, on the morning of that sixth day of September, those two, risking their lives for mercy, pulled through the tempest to the wreck. Nine human beings were there, in the very grasp of death. And these nine, one by one, this brave girl and her father, going and coming, rescued and carried to the lighthouse, and nursed them till help came.

Oh! the land rang with praises of this heroic maiden. And poets sang these praises. And royal people sent for her to their houses to see her. But this was her glory in the sight of God, that she had made beautiful for evermore, so that it shines to this day in the memory of men, the lonely and humble lot in which God had placed her.

I used to be a frequent visitor at a home which was every way different from Grace Darling's, and also poorer and drearier. It was a home in a lonesome village, and it consisted of a single room. A poor widow lived in it with her three children—two boys and a girl. All the joy of this widow's heart for this life depended on her children. And the highest service these children had it in their power at that time to render to her was to make the heart of their mother glad. I am happy to say that they were all good children; but I think the flower of the house was Jamie. He had never spoken a cross word to his mother. He had never disobeyed her. But the thing that filled her heart with the greatest joy was this—that Jamie had begun to fear God, and to give signs that his heart was right with God. Here is one little incident out of this boy's life. I do not suppose it was anything remarkable for him, or the best thing that might be told, but it is the thing concerning him I happen to know best. Being very poor, the widow had to send out her children early to work. Jamie was sent to a farm seven miles away to herd some cows; but it was part of the bargain with the master that he should get home every second Saturday afternoon, that he might go to church next day with his mother.

One Saturday Jamie was pushing along the lonely road on his way home. He had only travelled about a mile when, at a turn of the road, three or four very wicked boys, who disliked him for going home to church, and refusing to join them in mischief, came rushing out from a clump of trees with a fierce bulldog, and said: 'Brown, you must say the bad words we tell you, before you go another step, or we'll send



the dog at you'. And then they began to swear and speak the worst of words. Now there was one thing Jamie had learned at his mother's fireside, and that was, that it was wrong to take God's name in vain, and wrong to foul the tongue with bad words. But he simply said, 'Let me go, I want to get home'. 'Not one step farther,' said the biggest fellow, 'until you say these words after me. Swear this oath and we'll let you go.' And he repeated wild and wicked words. 'I dare not say that,' replied the widow's son; 'and you have no right to ask me.' 'Swear the oath this moment, or we will let slip the dog.' 'I will not swear that oath; and you have no right to slip the dog on me.' They gave him one more chance, and then let loose the dog. That night, as his mother and the other two sat round the fire, the brave boy told the rest of the adventure. It came into his head as his savage persecutors were unloosing the dog, that God, who shut the mouths of the lions in the den where Daniel was, could shut the mouth of the fierce dog on that lonely road. And God did shut the mouth of the dog. The big, hulking scoundrels, more brutal than their dog, yelled it at the harmless orphan boy. The dog barked furiously for a second or two, and went rushing up to him. But it neither bit nor offered to bite. And Jamie was delivered out of their hands. In all the land that night, there was not a spot more filled with peace and thankful joy than the humble fireside in the one poor room, where Jamie made his mother's heart glad, and his home beautiful by telling what I have attempted to tell over again.

Jamie lives where my mouse-car lived. And I went there to see him two or three years ago. The little hero of ten had become a man with a wife and two children. But he was in one thing the same as before. His pure upright life was making beautiful the humble home where God had placed him. And when I called on the old mother, and spoke about her son, her face lighted up into one of the pleasantest smiles, and she said: 'He's a joy to me still; and although he has a house of his ain, he aye looks well to me'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 165.

### ONLY A CHILD

'For I am a child.'—JEREMIAH I. 6.

Who Jeremiah was (ver. 1). Not like some boys—pushing, ambitious—but very timid, quiet, fond of books. Picture out God's interview with him. [Samuel is a parallel case, though probably Jeremiah was older.] What this poor timid lad was to be and do (vers. 5, 10). Harsh, disagreeable, almost impossible. 'Oh, I can't do that, I am only a child!' Such an answer sometimes good, sometimes bad. Think—

**I. When such an Answer is Good.**—When it shows real humility. 'Only a child, therefore must not put myself forward.' St. Augustine says there are three steps to heaven; first is humility, and second humility, and third humility.

What a blessing if some of us would say so sometimes, e.g.—

**1. Boy asks you to do something your mother has forbidden.** [Take instance—go a walk on Sunday, etc.] 'Mother says I mustn't.' 'Surely not going always to be tied to mother's apron strings!' Right answer, 'I am only a child'. How often say instead, 'I'm quite old enough to look out for myself'.

**Or, 2. Girl has some money.** Friend shows her earrings, or necklace, etc. 'Get something like that—brighten yourself up a bit.' Who will answer, 'Not fit for me; I am only a child'?

**Or, 3. Want to show how clever you are—how much you know.** So put in *your* word when older people are speaking. Should think, 'I cannot speak; I am only a child'.

So sometimes a *good* answer—and more, a *brave* one. Safe to be laughed at. 'Oh yes, you are afraid!' Better *be* brave and be *called* a coward, than be a *coward* and be called *brave*. None so brave as those who do not like being laughed at, yet who *will* do right even though others laugh at them.

**II. When such an Answer is Bad.**—Refer to the history. *Who* was speaking to Jeremiah? When *God* speaks should be like *Samuel*, ready to obey, however disagreeable.

'Oh, but God does not speak to children now!' Does He not? I think He does—tells them, too, to do things which they don't like. E.g. 'I want you to work harder; take more pains with lessons'. 'I want you to speak when you hear your friend say a wrong word.' 'Those two pennies you have, I want you to give part to help me.' Take care when *God* speaks, *not* to give Jeremiah's answer.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 111.

### THE HEAVENLY GUIDE

'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?'—JEREMIAH III. 4.

WE are all travellers, but are not all travelling in the same direction. We need a guide. There is no difficulty in finding one. There is only one to be relied upon.

**1. Some of the Reasons why we Need a Guide.**

- 1. Our ignorance of the way.
2. Our liability to take the wrong path.
3. Our liability to leave the right path after we have chosen it.

**II. Some of the Reasons why we Should Take God as our Guide.**—1. Because He knows the way.

2. Because He knows the trials that will befall us.
3. Because He knows the perils that we shall encounter.

4. Because He is our Father, and therefore kind and considerate.

**III. Some of the Reasons why we Should Ask God to Guide us Now.**—1. Because the present time is the best.

2. Because the present time is the safest.  
 3. Because the present may be the only time.—  
*Seeds and Saplings*, p. 21.

### THE FATHER-GUIDE

'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?'—JEREMIAH III. 4.

**I. The Young Need a Guide.**—You know some street or highway near your home; and you have heard of some city at a great distance from it. Suppose now, out on that road which you know, you saw a blind man groping along, and were told that he has to travel to the distant town, and present himself there by a fixed time, or he will lose his life; how you would sigh for the poor sightless wayfarer, and long for some one to take him by the hand. Still more would you pity him if you knew the way to be full of pits, and snares, and bordered with deep ditches. How can he escape? you would cry, and wonder he should venture to set out without a guide. Now, just as helpless and miserable as he is every person who has no heavenly leader. For the world is full of dangers which he does not see, threatening him on every side.

A young person guiding himself is even worse than blind, for he does not know his own unhappy case. If the blind man passing along the road could be supposed to think that he saw well enough, and so to rush on boldly, what would become of him? You would tremble for him at every step. And young thoughtless people, though blind, think they see.

Nay, sinners are even worse than this—they mistake good for evil; as if a man should see water where land was, and land where water was. So, in a dark night, I once heard of a person stepping into a canal thinking it firm ground. If there were growing in a garden a great variety of berries, some wholesome, some poisonous, and if the latter were very bright and beautiful, a child would be sure to pluck the deadly fruit. So it is with sinners. What glitters and pleases they choose, not knowing the end. A doleful thing once happened in the north—a gentleman and several guests were poisoned at a feast in his house by roots of deadly nightshade being mistaken for radishes. You remember the youth in the days of Elisha that went out and gathered wild gourds, and shred death into the pot. Now, a child left to himself will make in things of the soul like fatal mistakes. Sinful pleasures look at first like the forbidden fruit to Eve, but in the end kill like that.

But let us go back for a moment to our supposed blind man. Like him you are on a journey, and there is a distant city—the city of God—which you must reach or perish. To get into the way to it, and keep in that way, is your great need. Only the Holy Spirit can lead you into it. Your own wisdom would draw you another way. Even when it He must guide you, or your hearts would get weary of it, and leave it. They would call it hard—say there could be no great harm of going a little aside, or putting off further travel for a little. And the world

would tempt you into its flowery fields; and Satan would whisper to you to go. Many, many have hearkened and been lost. On the hill-sides in Scotland there are sometimes found green spots which being trod on prove but the covering of deep wells, and treacherous banks that yield to the slightest weight, rolling down the steep. How could an inexperienced child walk there safely? How can he pass through the world without a guide? But is there one to be had? Yes, for—

**II. God is Able to Guide the Young.**—To make a guide fully qualified to lead one in a difficult and dangerous road, two things are needful—knowledge and power. When a traveller wishes to go up to the top of one of the snow-crowned Alps, he must engage a guide. And that guide must not only know the route, but be quick of eye, steady of brain, strong of hand. In many a danger he will need all to help. The traveller will perish otherwise down some slippery steep, or in some yawning chasm, or over some dreadful precipice. To climb to the city of God is too difficult for those who are not led by the wise and strong Guide.

But do I need to tell you how wise and how strong your Heavenly Father is? You do not know your own hearts, or the world, or Satan; but God does. He sees inside things, and appearances never deceive him. If you were travelling in the East, you would see sometimes what appear to be doors in the rocks, and you might suppose them entrances to dwellings. Our Lord spoke of them. But though they were often 'beautiful outwardly,' and 'whited' so as to shine, they were but graves after all, 'full of dead men's bones'. God's eye sees past the whitewash of the world, and can keep you from making your home in a tomb.

**III. God is Willing to Guide the Young.**—There is no more necessary to prove this than the words of the text. He not only is ready to guide you if you ask Him, but He pleads with you to let Him do it. He asks you to let Him take you by the hand. And then He uses the name Father to encourage you to trust Him. If a little child were lost in a crowd, or in a maze of streets, or in a wood, and a man were to come up whom the child did not know, and offer to lead it home, it might refuse, and continue to cry on in its wretchedness. But if it heard its father's voice, saw his face, felt his touch, how soon would its trust be given, and its tears dried! God comes to you, poor wandered child, and says, Look up and see your Father, and let Him lead you.

**IV. It is the Duty of the Young to Ask God to Guide Them.**—He speaks to you first, but He wants you to speak to Him in return. He could guide you without your asking Him. He has done it to some. The little baby brother or sister whose dead body lying in the dark grave was led so, did not know anything about it till angel arms bore it into the presence of the Lord. But you are older, and know about your duty, and must do it. God does a great deal for you without your asking, but He won't take

you to heaven without. Is it not quite right that you should ask, to show your willingness? God does not want people in heaven who are forced there. Heaven is all love, and love does not force—it draws. If you were leading a blind man by the hand, and all the while he should keep trying to shake you off, saying, I don't wish you, I don't thank you—would you be likely to persevere? Can you expect God to do it?

**V. It is the Duty of the Young to Ask God to Guide Them at Once.**—From this time, says the text. Then seek Him now. This is safety, and it is duty. Safety, for there may be no later time, and there can be no better. What would you say about a blind man standing a yard off from a precipice, or a river's brink, if, when you ran to lead him out of danger, he should say, Wait a little till I have walked a few steps forward? Or without supposing danger quite so near, would a blind man be a wise man who should refuse to be led till he should fall a few times more, and be bruised and wounded more severely? Children who put off answering God's question in the text act like such a blind fool.

Now is the time for a 'perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten'; now is the time to give the soul up to be led by Jesus wholly; now is the time, in answer to the question of the text, for saying with all the heart, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth!—JOHN EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 12.

### BAD COINS

'Reprobate silver.'—JEREMIAH VI. 30.

You have heard of many sorts of silver—German silver, nickel silver, bright silver, dark silver, and so on. Do you think there really are so many kinds? Not a bit of it! There is only one kind of silver, and that is *real* silver—all the rest are only make-believes or mixed-up things.

What kind of silver, then, is this we read of—*reprobate* silver? It is silver that isn't silver at all! It has only had a kind of acquaintance with silver—lived next door to it, so to speak, and tried to look like it—for reprobate silver isn't silver at all—it is only lead.

Let me explain. You must understand that silver is dug out of the earth, and after it is washed it is put into a big pot, as we may call it, and placed in a furnace so that the silver may be melted out of the stones in which it is found. But it is very difficult to get it to come out of the stones of itself, and so, in old days, lead was melted along with it. When the lead had melted it melted the silver, and then the two mixed together. But once the silver was got out of the stones and the earth, people knew how to separate it from the lead, and so at last they had the silver by itself, quite pure.

But what about the lead? That was called 'reprobate silver'—refuse silver—which wasn't silver at all! It might think that it was, and it might put on airs because it had at one time something to do with silver

—but though the lead thought it was silver the silver-smith knew better—he rejected the lead—but carefully kept the silver.

And what is the meaning of it all? It means this: Airs won't do, pretension won't do, make-believe won't do—you must be *real*, or God will condemn you—will reject you.

Some people think that because they have mingled with Christians and perhaps have had a good deal to do with Christian things, that *therefore* they are Christians. But no!—that won't make them Christians; lead is lead only, though it has had something to do with silver, and for all its pretensions it will be cast out for lead when the silver is kept for the King's treasury. So be genuine, be real, be Christ's very own, whether people are seeing you and praising you or not. Have love for Jesus *in* you and not *on* you only; be real.

Shams always come to a bad end at the last. Some time or other you have gone into a shop and have seen a number of coins nailed to the counter. There was a sixpence, a shilling, a florin, and a half-crown, and perhaps some more, and you wondered why the shopkeeper nailed them down instead of using them. It was because they were reprobate silver—that is, they were only lead that wanted to pass itself off for silver. The coins *looked* all right—they had the stamp of the king or the queen on them too—possibly they were as good to look at as any others. Yes, but when they were tried they hadn't the right ring about them—they were found out to be false, and so were rejected—nailed down.

Don't you be a bad coin. Be real. A good silver sixpence is better in the long run than a bad half-crown; and though you may not be so clever as some folks, or so great as others, if you are real—a true Christian boy or girl—then on the Great Day when everything must be tested and tried as by fire, you will have honour when the shams will be put to shame.

So be real, truthful, honest, and open, whether people see you and praise you or whether they don't.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 202.

### THE WARNING AGAINST PRIDE

'Be not proud.'—JEREMIAH XIII. 15.

It is surprising how much the Bible has to say about the sin of pride, and about the proud people who give way to it. In looking carefully through the Bible, I find that there are more than a hundred places in which this sin is spoken of. Kings, and princes, and great and rich men are the ones most tempted to give way to pride. But it is not confined to them. The poorest people in the world, and those who occupy the very lowest positions in the land, are tempted to give way to pride. I have known a boy to feel proud because he had a bigger kite, or marble, than his playmate had; and I have known a little girl to feel proud because she had a prettier ribbon for her bonnet, or a nicer dress for her doll, than her companion had.



I. And the First Thing that Pride brings with it, on Account of which we ought to Mind this Warning, is 'Unhappiness'.—A proud person never can be happy, no matter how rich and great he may be. We have a striking illustration of this in the Book of Esther, in the Old Testament. There we read about Ahasuerus, the King of Persia, and the eastern part of the world. He was the greatest king then known. He had a great number of servants and officers under him. At the head of all these was a man whose name was Haman. He was the prime minister of that great kingdom; and his riches and honours were such that as he walked to and from the palace of the king the people who met him were accustomed to bow their heads and make obeisance to him. And every time this was done it helped to make him prouder still. But there was one man, named Mordecai, a Jew, who never would do this. He was the uncle of Esther, the wife of the king, and used to sit near the gate of the king's palace. And as he saw Haman pass by, he would not bow to him, or take any notice of him. This wounded Haman's pride, and made him feel very unhappy. On reaching home one day, after passing Mordecai, who had refused to bow to him, he was very angry. He spoke about it to some of his friends there. He told them of all the riches and honours which the king had bestowed upon him, but said that he could not enjoy any of these so long as Mordecai the Jew would not bow down and make obeisance to him. Here we see what unhappiness Haman's pride brought upon him. And this is the way in which it always acts.

In one of Æsop's fables, we have a good illustration of this part of our subject. It is the fable of the tortoise and the eagle.

The fable says, that there was a tortoise once that was very unhappy because he had no wings, and could not fly. He used to look up and see the eagles and other birds spreading out their wings and having a good time, as they went floating through the air. He said to himself, 'Oh, if I only had wings, as those birds have, so that I could rise up into the air, and sail about there as they do, how happy I should be!' One day, the fable says, he called to an eagle, and offered him a great reward if he would only teach him how to fly. 'I never shall be happy,' said the tortoise, 'till I get wings and am able to fly about in the air as you do.' The eagle told him he had no wings to give him, and did not know how to teach him to fly. But the tortoise pressed him so earnestly, and made him so many promises, that finally the eagle said, 'Well, I'll try what I can do. You get on my back, and I'll carry you up in the air, and we'll see what can be done.'

So the tortoise got on the back of the eagle. Then the eagle spread out his wings and began to soar aloft. He went up, and up, and up, till he had reached a great height. Then he said to the tortoise: 'Now, get ready. I'm going to throw you off, and you must try your hand at flying.' So the eagle threw him off; and he went down, down, down, till

at last he fell upon a hard rock, and was dashed to pieces.

Now here you see it was the pride of the tortoise which made him so unhappy, because he couldn't fly. And it was trying to gratify his pride which cost him his life.

II. The Second Reason why we ought to Mind this Warning, is that Pride brings with it 'Trouble'.—We never can set ourselves against any of God's laws without getting into trouble. Here, in our text, we have God's law regarding pride. He says to us, '*Be not proud*'. If we mind this law we shall have pleasure in what we do. If we do not mind this law we shall have trouble. It is impossible for us to go contrary to any of God's laws without finding trouble. Here is a very simple illustration of what I am saying. Suppose that you and I are sitting on the sofa in our parlour. We have a favourite pussy cat. She comes and lies down on the sofa between us. How nice and clean she looks, and how smooth and glossy her hair is! Now the law of God is that pussy's hair shall grow in the direction from her head down towards her tail. And if you lay your hand on her back, and stroke her hair down in that direction, how nice and smooth it will feel! Stroking in that way will give only pleasure, both to pussy and yourself. She will lie there, and purr away, to show you how happy she is. But suppose that instead of this you try to stroke her in the opposite direction. That would be contrary to God's law for stroking cats. It would only give trouble, both to pussy and yourself. She would stop purring, and jump down from the sofa, and run away, saying as plainly as she could by her actions, 'I don't like to be stroked in that way'.

And it is the same with all God's laws. If we act according to them, it will cause us pleasure. If we act contrary to them, it will cause us trouble. And this is just as true in regard to God's law concerning pride as it is in anything else. God says to each of us, '*Be not proud*'. This is His law about pride. If we mind this law, and walk humbly before Him, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, we shall find pleasure in so doing; but if we give way to pride, and break God's law, it will be sure to cause us trouble. Let us look at some illustrations of this.

Two masons were engaged in building a brick wall in front of a high house. One of them was older and more experienced than his companion. The younger one, whose name was Ben, placed a brick in the wall which was thicker at one end than at the other. His companion noticed it, and said, 'Ben, if I were you, I wouldn't leave that brick there. It's not straight, and will be likely to injure the wall by making it untrue.'

'Pooh!' said Ben, 'what difference will such a trifle as that make? You are too particular.'

'My mother used to teach me,' said his friend, 'that truth is truth; and that ever so little an untruth is a lie, and that a lie is no trifle.'

Now Ben was a proud young fellow. His pride was offended by what his friend had said to him.

So he straightened himself up, and said in an angry tone —

‘Well, I guess I understand my business as well as you do. I am sure that brick won’t do any harm.’

His friend said nothing more to him. They both went quietly on with their work, laying one brick after another, and carrying the wall up higher till the close of the day. Then they quitted their work and went home.

The next morning, they went back to go on with their work again. But when they got there, they found the wall all in ruins. The explanation of it was this: that uneven brick had given it a little slant. As the wall got up higher, the slant increased, till at last, in the middle of the night, it tumbled over and fell down to the ground.

And here we see the trouble which this young man brought on himself by his pride. If he had only learned to mind this Bible warning against it, that wall would not have fallen down, and he would have been saved the trouble of building it up again. The second reason why we ought to mind this warning is because pride brings trouble with it.

**III. The Third Reason why we ought to Mind this Warning is that Pride brings with it ‘Loss’.**—The Apostle tells us that ‘God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble’. So if we give way to pride, we are in a position in which God is resisting us, and then it is certain that we can expect nothing but loss in everything that we do. In the words of our text, God says to us, ‘Be not proud’. This is His command to us concerning pride. David tells us that ‘in keeping His commandments there is great reward’. But if we give way to pride we are breaking one of God’s commands, and then of course we shall lose the great reward He promises to those who keep His commands.

When we begin to love and serve God, He says to each of us, ‘from this day will I bless thee’. And we are told that ‘the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow’. The riches which this blessing brings us do not mean gold and silver, and earthly property. The way in which God’s blessing makes His people rich is in the peace, and joy, and happiness which He gives them; in the sense of His favour, and the protection which they have in this world, and in the hope of sharing His presence and glory for ever in heaven. But if we give way to pride, we cannot love and serve God; and then we must lose the blessing which God promises to those who do love and serve Him. And *this* is the greatest loss we can ever meet with in this world. To those who truly serve Him God promises that He will ‘make all things work together for their good’. This is one of the most precious promises to be found in the Bible. But if we give way to pride we cannot love God; and then we must lose that sweet promise; and nobody can calculate how great that loss would be. We read in another place that ‘pride goeth

before destruction’. The word ‘destruction’ here used is a very comprehensive word. It takes in a great deal. It means the destruction or loss of our peace, our happiness, our prosperity in this world; and in the world to come the loss of our souls, the loss of heaven. And can we think of any loss equal to this? Now let us look at some illustrations of the great loss that comes from pride.

We have our first illustration in the case of the angels.

I refer particularly now to those angels that ‘kept not their first estate’. We speak of them as ‘the fallen angels’. They were made just like the other angels. They were as pure, as holy, as happy, as perfect as angels could be. God was their Father, and heaven was their home. They had the prospect before them of being perfectly happy for ever. But, somehow or other, we know not how, they gave way to pride. They were unwilling any longer to obey God. Then we are told that ‘there was war in heaven’. And the end of it was, that they were cast down from heaven to hell. Their pride cost them the loss of heaven.

We have our next illustration in the case of Adam and Eve. God made them perfect, and put them in the Garden of Eden as their home. There they had everything around them to make them perfectly happy. They did as they wished, and went where they pleased in that beautiful garden. God told them that they might eat of all the trees of the garden except one; but of that they must not eat. *This* was the only command they had to mind. That made their situation very easy. But Satan got into that garden. He came and tempted them to eat of that tree. He told them that if they would only eat of it, they would become as wise as gods. This kindled their pride. They felt that they would like above all things to be made like gods. This thought led them to break the one command which God had given them, and to eat of the fruit of that forbidden tree. The result was that they were driven out of Paradise. Their pride caused them the loss of that beautiful garden.

Our next illustration we have in the case of Saul, the first King of Israel. There had been no king in his family before him. His father was only a farmer. But one time some of his asses had wandered away and got lost. Saul was sent out to try and find them. After hunting for them a long time in vain, he was at a loss what to do. So he made up his mind to call on the Prophet Samuel, and ask for information about the lost asses. Samuel told him not to give himself any more trouble about them, as they had been found. Then Samuel took him aside, and told him that God had chosen him to be king over Israel, and had given him, Samuel, direction to anoint him king. He did so. Thus Saul was made King of Israel. And if he had only minded this warning against pride, there never would have been any other Kings of Israel but the descendants of Saul. But he became proud. His pride kept him from doing what

God told him to do. And for this reason God took the kingdom from Saul and gave it to David. And so we see how Saul's pride brought upon him the loss of his kingdom.

Jesus, our blessed Saviour, 'came to visit us in great humility'. And if we pray for grace to be like Him and to 'tread in the blessed steps of His most holy life,' it is very certain that we shall mind the warning of our text, 'be not proud'.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 239.

#### CHRIST RESHAPING THE SOUL

'He made it again another vessel.'—JEREMIAH XVIII. 4.

IN the city of Florence, more than four hundred years ago, there happened to be a great block of marble. At that time the people of Florence loved to have marble figures of saints and angels in the streets and squares of their city. The rulers of the city, wishing in this to please the people, sent for a carver of marble and said to him, 'Take this block of marble and carve it into a statue for our city'. But the man to whom this was said was careless or unskilful. He spoiled the block. He cut into it here and there, but brought out no statue. And it was cast aside, and lay in one of the building-yards of the city covered with sand and rubbish, until it was looked upon as a worthless thing.

When the marble had lain in that place nearly forty years, a young man, who is now known as the great Michael Angelo, had occasion to be in the yard where it lay. And seeing the block buried in the rubbish, he said, 'I wish the rulers of the city would give this to me to carve'. 'But it is spoiled for carving,' said a friend: 'Not so spoiled,' answered Angelo, 'that there is not an angel inside still.' The rulers hearing of this, and looking upon the block as worthless in its present state, said, 'The young carver might go to work upon it and let the angel out'. So he cleared it from the rubbish, took his hammer and chisel, and began to carve. And bit by bit the misshapen block came into shape. And at last, when his carving was ended, there stood before the eyes of the citizens a splendid figure of David with his sling. And this the citizens set up with joy in their city, and it is one of the great sights of Florence to this day.

When I read this story the other day, in the Life of Michael Angelo, I said to myself, 'It is like the history of man upon the earth. First there is the fair unspoiled marble of human life, the first life in the garden, as made by God; then there is the marred life, the life misshapen by sin; then the beautiful new form of life, the new shapely Christian life, wrought in us by Jesus Christ. It is also like the story of the Prodigal. First there is the fair boy, the innocent life, with the promise of all good in it, in the early home; then there is the spoiled boy, the boy who would be a lord to himself, who took his life into a far land, and marred and wasted it all by sin; and then there is the boy new-made, forgiven, clothed,

and in his right mind, received back into the home once more.'

This led me to think of other lives I had known or read about, lives that had been marred by sin and cast out as worthless, just as the block of marble had been. And then I went on to think of the merciful Saviour finding these lives in their lostness, and lifting them up out of the dust, and reshaping them, and making them beautiful with the beauty of His own life.

I. The first I thought of was John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. There was never a young life more like a marred block than his when he was a boy. You have all read the *Pilgrim's Progress*. You remember the story of Christian and his burden, the evil city from which he fled, and the wicket gate through which he escaped, and the cross where his burden fell off, and the open grave into which it fell. You remember the strange things which happened to him after that, the strange places he saw, and the people he met by the way. And you cannot have forgotten the river he passed over at last, or the songs which were sung as he and Hopeful were led up to the gate of the Celestial City on the other side.

Could you imagine that the man who wrote that wonderful story had once been a rude, godless, and wicked boy? Yet that is his own account of his early life. Bad companions, and ignorance, and his own foolish heart led him into evil of every kind. 'It was my delight,' he says, 'to be taken captive by the devil at his will; being filled with all unrighteousness, so that from a child I had few equals, both for cursing, lying, and blaspheming the name of God.'

John was a tinker, and the son of a tinker, in the town of Elstow. He had been taught to read, but forgot it. He was idle and given to play. When he grew up to be a lad, for a short time he had to become a soldier, and go into battle. But all through these years the Lord Jesus was watching over him, and preparing him to be one of His soldiers, and to write the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He sent strange thoughts and voices into the lad's heart. One Sunday afternoon as he was playing on Elstow Green at *Tip Cat* with other lads, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?' Although the voice was only in his own soul, it sounded so real that he looked up to heaven for the speaker. Like Nebuchadnezzar of old also the thoughts on his bed troubled him. He had dreams in which he saw wicked men shut up in globes of fire. His thoughts, when those dreams came, were like masterless hounds rushing up and down in his soul. Once, for a whole year, and after he had taken Christ for his Lord, he was tempted by a voice which told him to sell Christ as Esau had sold his birthright. The voice said, 'Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him'. Sometimes it would say it hundreds of times together, till he had to set his soul against it.

'One morning,' he tells us, in the story of his life, 'as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times,



fiercely assaulted with this temptation, the wicked suggestion running in my mind, "Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him," as fast as a man could speak. I answered, "No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands," at least twenty times together. But at last, after much striving, I felt this thought pass through my heart, *Let Him go if He will*; and I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent thereto.

John thought he was now fairly lost. 'Down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair.'

But John was not lost. Christ was bringing his mishapen life into His own form. In His kindness He gave him a godly wife, who taught him once more to read, and used to tell him how good it is to be good. Her father was good. John tried hard to be like her father. He went to church. He read the Bible. He followed the Ten Commandments. He prayed. Still he was not happy. But one day, he says, 'The good providence of God called me to Bedford to work at my calling, and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking about the things of God'. He drew near. He listened to their talk. It was about the new birth. He learned for the first time, like Nicodemus, that a man must be born again. He now saw that it was not the Ten Commandments, or going to church, that was to save him, but a new heart. And in good time, but not without many temptations, such as the one to sell the Saviour, he received from that Saviour the new heart, and never more turned aside. And so it came to pass, that out of this poor, ignorant, idle gipsy lad, Christ formed a new, manly, beautiful life. Evil dreams of wicked men in globes of fire passed into the back region of his soul, and dreams of Christian pilgrims came into their place. He became a great preacher in this land. And although evil men put him into prison for preaching, he, even in the prison, dreamed his dream of heaven. He heard the bells of the Celestial City ringing, and saw the forms of angels and just men made perfect going up and down on the golden streets. And in the solitude of his prison, with only his blind daughter to visit him, he wrote that story which old and young shall read as long as books are read in this world, the story of Christian's pilgrimage from earth to heaven.

II. It was a great blessing to John Bunyan that God gave him a wife who could pray. She prayed for him. It is the same blessing to you when you have fathers and mothers who pray. They are always asking Jesus to give you His own beautiful form of life. And if, at any time, in any of their children they see evil coming into the life, or the first fair form of baby life becoming spoiled by sin, it is to Jesus they go in their distress. They say to him, 'Lord Jesus, save our child; for thy mercy sake reshape the soul'. But many a praying parent has to die before the prayers are answered, and the beauty of God can be seen on the children.

In a seaport town in Scotland, about twenty years ago, a Christian mother was dying, and some very earnest prayers which she had offered were unanswered still. Her husband, her sister, and all her children, except one, were in the room beside her. 'Are you willing to go, darling?' the sister said, bending over and kissing her. 'If it seems good to my Father, I am,' she whispered. Then, after a little pause, she added, 'And I have no fear and no care?'. But when she said 'no care,' the sister, with all who were in the room, thought of the absent one. And she said, 'About Dan, dearest, have you no care for Dan?' The dying mother said, whispering her words out one by one, 'My prayers for Dan are with God; He will answer them in His good time. Dan will yet become a child of God. Day and night for seven years I have prayed that this might come to pass.' These were her last words. In a little while she died.

Dan had been a great care to her. He had been idle and wilful, and many things besides that are bad. His boyhood was wasted with idleness. He passed through school without learning anything except to read and write. There was no fear of God in his heart. He hated goodness and work. Many a time his mother had taken him into her room, and pleaded with him to leave his idleness and folly; but she pleaded in vain. At last he went to sea, and at the time she died was sailing on the coast of China.

But his mother had not left her prayers with God in vain. About six months after he had heard of her death, he was one night keeping watch with another sailor on the look-out. The night was dark, a strong wind was blowing, and the ship in full sail running before the wind. As he was pacing backwards and forwards on the poop, the one sailor on the one side, he on the other, the ship gave a sudden lurch, and he was thrown overboard. In a moment he felt himself falling through the darkness into the deeper darkness of the sea. He heard, or fancied he heard, the words, 'Man overboard,' sounded out by his companion. But next moment he felt himself in the black waters, and sinking, sinking into their depths. He knew he had almost no chance of being saved. The ship was rushing forward at great speed, and must already be far from where he sank; and the night was very dark. But soon he ceased to think about safety or ship. His whole by-past life seemed to open up before him. He saw the school in which he was so idle, and the church which was such a weariness to him, and the house he had loved so ill, and the room in that home in which his mother had so often prayed and pleaded with him to change his life. The years of his boyhood came back to him one by one; and days in which he had played truant, and the faces of companions with whom he had wrought mischief. Then he recalled the time when he first went to sea, and his mother's tears as she parted with him. And then a vision of his mother on her death-bed, as she had been described to him in letters from home, came vividly into his soul. He seemed to be in the very room, and to hear the words

which she had spoken, and her last words about himself. Then there was a great light, and in the centre of it he saw his mother's face; then, as he looked at her, expecting her to smile on him, the face changed and disappeared, and there was a sound of bells; then a murmur as of bees; then the light faded, and a great silence fell upon his soul.

When he came to himself again, he was lying in his berth. Dark though the night was, and far behind though the ship had left him, his brave shipmates searched back for him with the long-boat until they found him, and found him as he rose, perhaps for the last time, to the surface. It was a long week before he was able to leave the berth. But he left it a new man. In that week God gave him a new heart, and changed him in some measure into His own likeness. His mother's prayers were answered, as she foretold. Her idle, wilful boy became an earnest Christian man, and for many years did noble Christian service as captain of a vessel.

III. I may be speaking to some boy or girl who is passing an unchristian childhood, and whose heart is beginning to see the evil of it, and to wish that Christ would put that evil away. For that child's sake I will tell a little history of a childhood which a Christian lady once told to me. The lady and I were speaking of children, and she said: 'God does not despair of any child. God can turn boys and girls who are rude, and selfish, and untruthful, into right-hearted children of His own. I am far from being what I ought to be. I am still a very imperfect, very frail servant of the Lord. But my childhood, when I look back to it, was as far from right as any child's could well be. I had no thought but for myself. I have never since met a child so selfish as I then was. My brothers and sisters, my father and mother—I cared for none of them in comparison with myself. I coveted and seized the best things. I took the best places for myself. When the younger children came in cold and weary, I would not leave the warm corner at the fire to help them, or give them the corner to sit in. When anybody in the house was sick, it was a worry to me to be asked to wait in the sick-room, even for half an hour. And when I was found out in any of my selfish and unkind ways, if I could defend myself by a lie, I told that lie. One day, there had been some worse outburst of my selfishness and untruthfulness than usual, and my father was present. "Child, child," he said to me in bitterness, "I have never had one hour's pleasure in you." It was a terrible word to come from a father's lips. I was fourteen at the time, and old enough to know the meaning and feel the pain of the word. It went into my soul like a knife. I crept out of sight, went up to my little room, threw myself on the floor, and tried to cry. But no tears came to my eyes. I only felt the sharp words cutting me through and through, "Child, child, I have never had one hour's pleasure in you".'

'I tried to think my father wrong, tried to think him mistaken, or unjust, or hard. But the more I thought

of his words, the more clearly I saw them to be true. Then my thoughts went up to the Father in heaven. Had he also never had an hour's pleasure in me? I became afraid. I thought I was in His presence. And a face that at a distance was in some things like my father's, in some other things like pictures of angels I had seen, seemed to look at me, and look down into my very soul, with severe eyes, while from the lips came the words, "Never one hour's pleasure in you".'

'I do not know how I got into bed that night, and I have no remembrance of what took place for the next day or two. I could never afterwards feel that my father loved me. And he died without taking back his words or showing me any love. But I thank him for his words. They were God's sharp tools to new-shape me. My life began to change from the hour they were spoken. With my whole strength I cried to God to help me to cast my selfishness away. And God has been very kind. As I said, I am still far from being what I ought to be; but He sends hours to me at times in which I am free to think, that even He is well pleased with me now, for Jesus' sake.'

IV. I will only say one thing more. God is very good, and both able and willing to reshape lives which have been spoiled by sin; but do not think it is all the same in the end for the lives He reshapes, as if they had never been spoiled by sin.

I knew a man once whom God had new-made—a most worthy, kind-hearted, God-fearing man. What God had changed him from was hard-heartedness. He had hard thoughts about God and man. He was hard in all his ways. He believed that everybody was dishonest, and had to be watched. He used to say, 'God is no more to be trusted than other people'. Although he came to the church on Sunday, he listened with hard thoughts to everything that was said. He was always finding fault, always saying to some one or other some bitter unkind word.

By the merciful providence of God this hard-hearted man fell ill, and for a time it seemed as if his illness might end in death. The servants whose honesty he never believed in were very kind to him in this illness. Neighbours whom he had spoken unkind words of came in and helped. The pastor whom he had often sneered at, and his fellow-members in the church he attended, came about him in loving and tender ways. And this love touched his hard heart. Through this love came upon him, for the first time, a belief in the love of God. On his sick-bed he learned that God may be trusted. He learned how great and true the love must have been which sent Jesus to die for us. God's love shining from the cross of Jesus was like coals of fire upon his heart. Its hardness was melted away, and a gentle, loving, trustful spirit was given to him, and he rose from his bed a new man, humble, meek, merciful, and full of charitable thoughts and deeds. But when this took place he was nearly an old man. The years which went before were lost years to him. So long as they

lasted, the evil thoughts of his heart shut him out from being a friend either to God or man.

And therefore it is unwise and wrong for anyone to say, 'I will go on in evil a while longer, and God will make me all right in the end'. It is certain, that the longer one remains in such a way, the hurt of it will go deeper and deeper into the soul. Sin is always evil, and it always leaves evil marks behind.

The statue of David which Michael Angelo carved is not so beautiful as it would have been if the block from which he carved it had not been spoiled before. —ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 167.

### EBED-MELECH, THE MODEL OF KINDNESS

'Ebed-melech.'—JEREMIAH XXXVIII. 3.

ZEDEKIAH, the King of Israel, had a servant who was an Ethiopian, or a coloured man. The time here referred to was one of great trouble in Israel. The King of Babylon had invaded their country, and was now besieging the city of Jerusalem. God had sent the Prophet Jeremiah with a message to the King and princes of Israel. He told them that God wished them to give up their city to the King of Babylon. But they would not listen to what the prophet said. The princes were very angry with Jeremiah for the message which he brought them from God. They took him prisoner, and put him down in a deep, dark dungeon, where there was no one to attend to him, or give him anything to eat, and where he sank in the deep mire. No one took any notice of poor Jeremiah, but this good servant of the king—Ebed-melech. He felt very sorry for him, and kindly made up his mind that he would try and get him out of the dungeon. He went and spoke to the king about it. He told him that the prophet would surely die if he were left in the mire of that dark and dreadful dungeon. This dungeon was underground. There was no door to it. The only way of getting in and out of it was through an opening in the top, like those we see in our coal vaults.

The king told Ebed-melech to take some men with him and a strong rope, and go and lift Jeremiah out of the dungeon. He did as the king told him; and so the life of Jeremiah—the prophet of the Lord—was saved through the kindness of this humble servant of the king—Ebed-melech. He was the only one, among all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who showed any kindness to Jeremiah in his time of trouble. And so I wish now to speak of Ebed-melech as the *model of kindness*.

This is a good model for us all to study, because we can all show kindness to those about us, if we only try. And I wish to speak of *three* reasons why we should try to imitate this model of kindness.

I. We should do so, in the **First Place**, because it is '**Easy**' to Show Kindness.—Some things are very hard to do. We know for how many years the Government of England, of our own country, and of other nations have been trying to find the way to the North Pole. How much money has been spent, and how many valuable lives have been lost in these

attempts! And yet they have never succeeded. Getting to the North Pole is a very hard thing to do. Some things can only be done by those who have plenty of money. When a railroad has to be built, across a great country like ours, millions of money are needed for it; and nothing can be done without it. But it is very different with the work of showing kindness. There is nothing hard about this. We do not need much money to do it. The poor can show kindness as well as the rich. Ebed-melech had not much money. He was a poor coloured man—the servant, or slave of King Zedekiah; and yet he managed to show real kindness to the Prophet Jeremiah. He was the means of saving his life.

And if we learn, while we are young, to show kindness to those who are in trouble, we shall find that it is an easy thing to do.

Let us look at some examples of the easy way in which we may show kindness.

*Helping and thanking.*—It happened one day that an old Scotchman was taking his grist to the mill. It was in sacks, which were thrown across the back of the horse. In going along the horse stumbled, and the sacks of grain fell to the ground. The old man had not strength enough to lift the sacks up and put them on the horse's back again. He looked around to see if there was one near to help him. Presently he saw a person on horseback coming along the road; and he thought he would ask him for help. But the horseman proved to be a nobleman, who lived in the great castle near by, and the old man thought it never would do to ask such a favour of him. But that nobleman was a gentleman. He had learned to practise this point of the model we are considering. He knew how easy it was to show kindness. And so, without waiting to be asked, when he saw the old man's trouble, he instantly got off his horse and came and helped the farmer, whose name was John, to lift his sacks of grain on to the horse's back again. When this was done, John—for he was a gentleman too—took off his cap, and making a respectful bow, said, 'My lord, how shall I ever thank you for your very great kindness?'

'Very easily, John,' replied the nobleman. 'Whenever you see any one in trouble, as you were just now, help him out of it, and that will be the best way of thanking me.'

We ought to practise this point of the model before us, because it is easy to show kindness.

*A woman's love.*—A murderer sat in his cell in the gaol, repeating over and over again to himself the sentence pronounced by the judge:—

'You are to be hanged by the neck till you are dead, **dead, DEAD**—and may God have mercy on your soul!'

But there were no tears in the prisoner's eyes, and no penitence in his heart. His dark face grew blacker, and his wicked heart became harder still, as he went on repeating those dreadful words, and cursing both God and man.

Ministers had come to him with gospel messages of



Divine mercy; but he spurned their words, and told them to come no more into his presence. 'Why, man,' said one of them, 'you are condemned to die; and in a few weeks you will be launched into eternity, and how can you stand before God with all your sins unpardoned?'

'That's my business,' was his answer; 'I wish no further conversation with any of you.' And he waved his hand impatiently for them to depart.

A report of this interview was published in the papers the next day. Among those who read it was a timid, delicate Christian woman. As she read the report the tears dropped on the paper, and the earnest desire came into her heart to tell the poor condemned man that she was sorry for him. But she said to herself: 'I can't do it. I never was in the gaol in my life; and I wouldn't know what to say. And then I should be sure to cry. Oh, I wish I could go and speak a few kind words to him without weeping!'

This desire grew stronger in her every day; and one morning she gathered a beautiful bouquet of flowers from her garden, and went to the gaol. The gaoler admitted her to the prison. Then he threw open a window, through which, without entering, persons could converse with the prisoner; and calling him by name, said, 'Here is a lady who wishes to see you'. But as soon as she found herself standing face to face with the hard-featured, gloomy-looking murderer, the good woman's courage and voice entirely failed her. She could not utter a single word; but handing the poor prisoner the bouquet, she burst into tears.

The sight of the flowers and the weeping woman had a strange effect on the prisoner. It brought fresh to his memory scenes long passed. It called up the picture of a dear home across the sea, and of a fond Christian mother, who wept over him at parting. His hard heart was touched and softened. And while the woman wept outside the cell, he cried, with a great, deep, bitter cry, as the tears flowed down his face, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'. God heard his cry, and visited the heart of the prisoner with pardon and peace. That good woman's kindness and tears had melted his hard heart, and he was led like a little child to Christ. How easy she found it to show kindness to that poor man! And how much good it did to him!

**II. The Second Reason why we should try to Imitate this Model, and Learn this Lesson, is that Kindness is 'Useful'.**—Ebed-melech's kindness was useful to Jeremiah, because it saved his life. He lived for years after this, and was the means of doing a great deal of good to the people of Israel who were living then. If we knew more of the particulars of his history, it would be easy for us to point out the usefulness of his saved life. As the prophet of the Lord, his business was to make known God's will to the people of Israel. And all the good he did in this way, through the remaining years of his saved life, was the result of Ebed-melech's kindness.

But then Jeremiah has been useful to the Church of God ever since that day by the prophecies which he wrote. And a large portion of those prophecies was written after the day in which Ebed-melech saved his life. And this shows us how great the usefulness was of Ebed-melech's kindness.

And in learning to show kindness to others, there is no telling how much good we may do. And when we think how useful our kindness may be, we see a good reason why we should try to learn the lesson of which we are now speaking.

**III. But there is a Third Reason why we should try to Imitate the Model Ebed-melech has set us, or Learn to Show Kindness, and that is because Kindness is 'Profitable'.**—We see this in the case of Ebed-melech himself. His kindness to the prophet Jeremiah, in taking him out of that terrible dungeon, where he had sunk in the deep mire, was the means of saving his own life. That was the reward of his own kindness.

God sent word to Ebed-melech, by the Prophet Jeremiah, that when the city of Jerusalem should be taken by the Assyrians, He would put it into their hearts to show kindness to him by sparing his life. And so it came to pass. The princes, and nobles, and great men of the nation were all put to death. The king had his sons killed before his face. Then his eyes were put out, and he was carried captive to Babylon. And to the day of his death he never could forget the last sad sight that he witnessed before his eyes were put out. It was the mangled and bleeding bodies of his dead sons. How sad and sorrowful a recollection this must have been to him!

But Ebed-melech had his wife given to him as a reward for the kindness which he showed to the Prophet Jeremiah. Surely he found out that it was profitable to be kind.

*The beggar boy and the flowers.*—A little boy was standing near the gate in his father's garden. On the outside of the gate was a ragged little fellow, looking through the railing at the beautiful flowers that were blooming there.

'Go away, you beggar boy!' said the boy in the garden. 'You've no business to be looking at our flowers.'

The poor boy's face reddened with anger, to be spoken to so rudely, and he was about to answer in the same style when a bright young girl sprang out from an arbour near, and looking at her brother, said, 'How could you speak so roughly, Herbert? I'm sure his looking at the flowers won't hurt them.' And then turning to the boy outside the gate, in the kindest possible way, she said:—

'Little boy, I'll pick you some flowers if you'll wait a moment.' Then she gathered a beautiful bouquet, and handed it to him through the iron grating in the gate. He thanked her heartily, and turned away, with his face all lighted up with surprise and pleasure.

Twelve years pass away. That young girl has

grown up to be a woman, and is married. One summer afternoon she was walking with her husband in the garden, when she saw a young man, in a workman's dress, leaning over the fence, and looking earnestly at her and the flowers. She said to him, 'Are you fond of flowers, sir? It will give me great pleasure to gather some for you.'

The young man looked at her fair face, and then said: 'Twelve years ago I stood here a ragged boy, and you showed me the same kindness that you are showing me now. Your sweet flowers and your kind words made a new boy of me; yes, and they made a new man of me, too. Your bright face has been a light and comfort to me in many a dark hour; and now, thank God, though that boy is still only a humble, hard-working man, yet he is an honest, grateful, God-fearing man, and he owes it all, through God's blessing, to your kindness.'

Tears stood in that lady's eyes as she heard these words; and turning to her husband, she said, 'God put it into my heart to do that little kindness, and see how great a reward it has brought!' Certainly this shows that kindness *is* profitable.

I have just one other illustration to give under this point of our subject. We may call it—

*How God works.*—This story is about a certain king, whose name was Rhoud. He lived in the north of Europe some centuries ago. At the time to which our story refers there was great trouble in his kingdom. There were many enemies of the king who were plotting to take away his life.

One day the king was taking a walk through the woods. A prince, whose name was Regan, was his companion. They were talking about the troubles in the kingdom. As they were going on through the beautiful woods, they heard something scream pitifully in one of the trees.

'It is a bird up yonder tree,' said the king; 'it screams because it is in some trouble.'

'Let it scream,' said Prince Regan. 'Just now we have more important things to think about than a little bird up a tree.'

'The nearest duty first,' said the king. 'There is nothing more important now than to show kindness to that little creature in its distress. Regan, I must climb up that tree.'

'But suppose you should fall and be killed, what a shame it would be to have it said that our king lost his life for the sake of a little bird!'

'Many a life has been lost for less,' replied the king, as he prepared to mount the tree. By the prince's help he managed to get hold of the lower branches. Then he went slowly up, higher and higher, till finally he came to where the bird was. It was a pretty little goldfinch, which had caught its leg in a crack of one of the branches of the tree, and could not get it loosened. The king took it carefully out, and came down safely, with the little goldfinch in his hand. He stroked its feathers tenderly, saying as he did so: 'It shall be my adopted child, and the playmate of my little daughter Agnar'.

He took the bird home, and had a beautiful cage made for it. 'How childish the king is!' said one of his officers. 'When war is at the door, and he is surrounded by great dangers, he finds time to save a little bird, and takes care of it himself.'

In the meantime, his enemies were still plotting against him. Two of the servants in the king's palace had been bribed to help them in carrying out their plans.

One day, when the king was out hunting with his men, his enemies made an arrangement by which they hoped to secure the death of the king during the following night. Their plan was this: in the ceiling of the king's bed-chamber, and directly over the bed on which he slept, was a very heavy beam of timber. This was loosened, and yet held in its place in such a way that, whenever they desired, it could be made to fall across the king's bed, and so crush him to death. Then they thought it would be supposed that the king had met his death by accident. People would say that the ceiling over the king's bed was weak, and had fallen during the night.

The king returned from his hunting late at night. He went to bed weary, and soon fell asleep, and probably would never have risen again had not the little bird suddenly awakened him by its screaming. He sprang from his bed to see what was the matter. He soon found that he had forgotten that morning, before going a-hunting, to give the little creature any water to drink, or any food to eat; and at evening, on his return, he was so tired that he went to bed without thinking of the bird. He took the cage in his hand, and said: 'You dear little creature! and did I save thy life only to let thee perish with hunger?'

Then he poured some water into the little glass, and put some seed in the little box in the cage.

And while he was doing this, the beam fell from the ceiling, with tremendous noise, and striking the bed, crushed it flat to the floor. The noise was heard all over the palace. The soldiers sleeping in the palace-yard awoke, and drew their swords. The frightened servants rushed into the king's chamber, with torches flaming in their trembling hands. As soon as they saw the ruins of the bed, they exclaimed: 'The king is killed! King Rhoud is crushed to pieces!'

But on looking round, they saw the king standing unhurt, with the bird-cage in his hand. He smiled on them, and exclaimed: 'Do not fear, my friends; God has kept His hand over me'.

When Prince Regan heard of all this—how the beam had fallen, and how the little bird had saved the king's life—he was amazed beyond measure. Then fixing his tearful eyes on the king, he said, 'How wonderfully God works! I never again shall doubt that there is a Providence in all things.' The king answered with a smile, 'Then you can see, Regan, that we should not despise little folks. If a king can save a bird, then the bird can save the king.'—

RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 209.

THE DOVE AS A GUIDE TO PERSONAL  
SAFETY

'Dwell in the rock, and be like the dove.'—JEREMIAH  
XLVIII. 28.

THIS shows the special wisdom of the dove to make its home and dwelling-place in the strong rock. The Lord Jesus is the 'Rock of Ages,' and all those who are wise build and hide and rest in Him for eternity.

Christ is the Foundation Rock (Matt. vii. 25); the Refreshing Rock (Ex. xvii. 6); the Sheltering Rock (Isa. xxxii. 2); and the Eternal Rock (Isa. xxvi. 4, margin). If we are wise like the dove, we shall hide in this Rock, and be safe for ever.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.

—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 172.



# LAMENTATIONS

## HOPING AND WAITING

'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.'—LAMENTATIONS III. 26.

HOPING and waiting—these are two of the biggest things that anybody can do, and two of the hardest to learn. But we must learn them and must do them if we would find the salvation of the Lord.

Do you know what it is to hope for a thing? It is to keep brave and expect it, even though you haven't got it yet, and there is nothing to show how you are to get it. When the farmer puts the seed in the ground in the spring-time, it is because he hopes by the end of the summer to have a great crop of wheat. But he doesn't see the wheat yet; he has not got it; he can only hope and quietly wait for it. And some days it will be very hard for him to hope. Storms will come, and floods of water will run down the furrows, and there will be fear that the seeds will be rotted away. Or snow and hailstones will fall just when the tassels are coming out, and then it will look as if there could be no harvest. The farmer is sad and troubled sometimes, but he hopes on, and at last, through all the risks and all the troubles, the autumn comes, and the harvest is gathered safe home. It is his hoping, hoping, always hoping, that keeps up his heart.

It is the same with us and everything in the world. There is a risk about it all. Yes, there is nothing great or grand or good in the world but you must run risks to get it. Why, what a big risk baby takes when he is good enough to come among us! He can't do anything for himself; he can't feed himself; he can't clothe himself; he can't even ask for what he wants. What a big risk he runs of being starved to death! I don't know how many diseases there are in the world, but he may catch any of them and be killed. I don't know how many sorts of accidents might occur, but any of them might happen to him. He has to risk all that. What keeps him here? What prevents him from running away back again to where he came from? It is hope: in spite of all the risks he has to run, he hopes to be able to dodge them all and get safe through.

And you? You never go through a single day without running hundreds and hundreds of risks. It is very easy for you to run out of the way of a carriage, but what if your ankle suddenly gave way? It is very pleasant to walk along the street, but what if the wind blows down a chimney-pot or slate on your head? Why, there is hardly a moment we live but we are running some risk: a sniff from a drain, a careless step, or a bit of a chill, when we are not very strong, and we are gone. What keeps us up? What helps us to live? It is hope, simple hope.

And that is how ships get over the seas and into the harbour at last. They meet with storms and calms, sunken rocks and drifting wrecks, and many

other things that *might* do them harm; but they take all risk, and so they do something at last. Everything in the world is a risk, and the only thing that can keep you up is hope. So hope on, hope ever, keep a stout heart, and trust in God.

And especially about being saved. Some people are frightened to begin to go on God's way, and to say boldly that they belong to Jesus. They look along the road, and they see so many dangers, so many temptations, so many snares, that they are afraid if they begin they will never be able to end. They forget that they won't have to meet these dangers and temptations and snares all at once, but only one at a time; it is wonderful when we come to a difficulty how hope can guide us through it. So do not be afraid of not getting to heaven because of anything that can happen on earth. Trust in the Lord, and hope on, hope on still. It will sometimes be hard to do it; I know things will be dark, and the road will be rough, and perhaps you yourself will be a bit weak and tired; but if your hope is in the Lord, and not in yourself, never be afraid, but go on—He will carry you through. *Hope*, that is the first thing, the great thing, the heart of it all.

But *wait*—that is the next thing. 'What was the hardest bit of the battle?' I asked an old soldier once who had been in a great and terrible fight. I expected him to say it was when the guns began to blaze, or when the cavalry came riding down, or when the swords were slashing wildly all around. But no! 'The hardest bit of the battle,' he said, 'was waiting for the battle to begin' You will often find it harder to wait than to work.

The Rev. William Gray, when he was in the Alps, visited a glacier grotto that was reached by a tunnel bored through the solid ice. 'As we penetrated into the chilly depths,' he says, 'away from the outside sunshine that flooded valley and peak, the light became dimmer and dimmer, and when we stood in the narrow chamber at the end of the passage, the darkness was as black as pitch. 'Wait,' said the guide, 'and in five minutes you shall see light clearly.' We waited, and it was just as he had told us. Yet no lamp was lit, no match was struck. What happened was this: as the eye got accustomed to its new surroundings, the atmosphere gradually brightened, the walls and the roof of the grotto glimmered into pure translucent green, and in the clear soft light that encircled us we could recognise the faces of our companions, and read the smallest type in our guide-books.'

That is what waiting can do. It can open our eyes to see things we could not see before, to see the beautiful things of God that are all around us, but which only patient, waiting eyes can see.—J. REID HOWARR, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 75.

## BEARING THE YOKE IN YOUTH

'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.'—  
LAMENTATIONS III. 27.

THE words of our text, found in the mouth of the young, open to us this whole matter of preparing oneself in youth to meet and to assume the labours, the burdens, and, if need be, the sorrows of life. In this sense, as a distinct matter of preparation for later life, we now use the words, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth'. And I affirm that no one who understands the mind and temper of youth will call this subject sad or gloomy. Is a technical preparation for later life sad or gloomy? Are we mournful when we see the young student of chemistry at work in his laboratory, or the student of theology in his lecture-room? Are we saddened by the bright, ambitious eyes, the diligent demeanour of the youth beginning his clerkship, learning the business of his employer, preparing for success and power in later life? Why, then, associate the thought of gloom with that personal preparation of life and character for the future—of which we have been speaking? Is it sad to urge the young to lay hold upon themselves, with a view to developing the beauties and the glories of a perfect character, rather than yield themselves to the wild growth of those passions and tendencies which must surely disgrace, enfeeble, and destroy? So far from finding in our text a suggestion of gloom or sadness, there is nothing presented to us save what is grand, and strong, and hopeful, when we say, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth'.

There are three words by which I would characterise and explain the bearing of the yoke in youth, so far as we are competent to put the yoke upon ourselves. The words are these: *Self-discipline*, *Responsibility*, *Discipleship*. It is a particular comfort to me, in pursuing this subject, to reflect that so many of the young persons present are personally known to me, and that with so much of your lives and with so many of your hopes I am familiar. In a multitude of instances you have been kind enough to speak of those hopes and desires; in others, close and careful observation has revealed them. Therefore there comes that sense of knowing just where you stand, and the relation to you of this mighty subject of special preparation for life by bearing the yoke in youth.

I. *Self-discipline*.—Two ideas are presented here: first, *Self*; second, *Discipline*. First, *Self*: Every human being is created with likes and dislikes; with appetites, passions, tendencies; and by the natural law under which these things move, they cut for themselves grooves in the personality of which they are attributes. We call those grooves habits. *Self* is that underlying existence upon which these various tendencies, appetites, affections, and aversions lie and work. The grooves they cut are cut in *self*. But *self* is not a rock. *Self* is not a mass of inanimate matter. *Self* is a moral life. *Self* is a seat of will-power. *Self* is a reservoir of strength. *Self* need not lie still and let passion, and prejudice, and impulse cut grooves upon it—as the schoolboy covers his slate

with idle signs and marks. *Self* can hear the Voice of God, and rise up and act.

Second, *Discipline*: *Discipline* is teaching and training. *Self-discipline* is self refusing to lie still and be rutted and grooved by passions and tendencies; rising up, taking those tendencies and appetites, and likes and dislikes, in hand—teaching them, training them, according to the law, not of pleasure or preference, but of right and wrong, as that law is communicated by God to the soul. Now note two facts about *self-discipline*: Whoever honestly undertakes it discovers how all of life must come under its influence. The body must be disciplined. The common matters of eating and drinking, of sleep and exercise, are a field for discipline—for bodily habits fastened upon us in youth may, as they are good or bad, crown or crush us in time and in eternity. The mind must be disciplined. To think well is not with many a natural gift. Books and schools are, to most of us, not only the guides, but practically the creators of intellectual force and vigour. The whole cycle of moral qualities must be disciplined. Courage, charity, patience, reverence, truthfulness; these, in most lives, require training the most conscientious, the most unremitting. So, *self-discipline*, honestly undertaken, is the education, not of one thing, but of every part of us. Again: *self-discipline* is found to consist mainly in compelling ourselves to cease from doing certain things agreeable to us, and to do certain other things which are distasteful. We must not misunderstand one another here. *Self-discipline* is laborious—it is often painful, often wearisome; but it is not arbitrary, nor capricious, nor frivolous. We do not make ourselves disagreeable things for the mere sake of doing them, but for the strength, and the completeness, and the power which arise from the deliberate conquering of a wrong feeling. To illustrate: you have the strongest possible dislike to approach any scene of human grief, pain, or agony. You desire to keep away from such things altogether, and be happy. That desire, and you know it, if permitted to be gratified, will make you, by degrees, the most supremely selfish of beings. *Self-discipline* consists, in this instance, in compelling yourself to go, when occasion offers, into the very midst of those conditions so distasteful to you, and in holding yourself there, and committing yourself to those very acts of the comforter and the sympathiser which have had so little charm for you heretofore. Along this line of discipline are all those acts of Christian labour from which we shrink and hold back, while convinced of our duty to go forward. And we cannot be too plain of speech in showing that in matters yet more personal, every life has its field of *self-discipline*. Your daily habits, your physical and mental customs, your social affiliations open to you a quiet way of doing a work in and upon yourself for which I believe you shall have cause to bless God throughout eternity. Are you too fond of sleep, though no bodily infirmity calls for late rising? Compel yourself to become an early riser, not for the mere sake of the thing itself, but for the power of that

victory upon you. Are you becoming dependent upon some physical luxury? Compel yourself to let it lie for a time untouched, not as a question of physical prudence, but for the value of that victory upon you. Doing these things quietly, without ostentation, day by day, you lay a yoke upon your own shoulders.

II. The second word by which we characterise the bearing of the yoke is Responsibility. It is good for one to bear this in youth. In this country, where the competitions of life are so tremendous and the number of inherited fortunes so small, it is indeed the prevalent law that the yoke of responsibility shall rest early on the young. And when we consider all the developments of our age, not only in mercantile callings, but in literary and social and ecclesiastical life, the tendency does indeed appear to be toward an increased multitude of those who in social and domestic circles, or in special forms of religious work, or in the great battle of the open world, are bearing this yoke in youth. It is a yoke which may, and often does, press too heavily; and all of us have within our observation instances where, to our view, it does seem a misfortune that the yoke of heavy responsibility must needs have been borne so early. Doubtless, there are many of whom, humanly speaking, it might be said: their life would have been richer, more beautiful in power and grace, had God spared them the yoke a little longer. There is a sense in which nothing is more pathetic than the phrase, 'an old head on young shoulders,' when adversity and anxiety have left their melancholy imprint on countenances where yet should twinkle the sunny smile of childhood. But among you, whom I address, these extreme cases, if they exist, are rare by comparison with the numbers of you who are compelled by circumstances to know just so much of care and responsibility as you can bear without a sense of oppression, and yet, with a sense of limitation. Such a position is the best, far the best for you. It is good for you to bear a yoke of that weight. You are not oppressed, you are not distracted by responsibility, yet you feel limited; you are happy, sometimes wondrously happy, yet in connection with a thought of care. God wills that you shall have some things to trouble you and give you a taste of anxiety. Certain things depend upon you; certain claims in the household, in the church, in the business world, are represented in you, and are to be met by you. And often, without doubt, this element of responsibility grows irksome, and you feel caged by it, chained by it, and long for the freedom of a mind without care, a life without claims. Now, I believe nothing ever learned in books is so good for one as this element of care. Entering into the life of youth it is a blessed yoke, a healthful discipline; for by it the fibres of character grow firm and reliable, the habitual meeting of smaller responsibilities prepares the way for greater as they come, and makes one able to bear silently and invisibly many a care and worry of later life which would excite almost to desperation one who had never had that early schooling in responsibility. The youthful heart which finds itself

encumbered by some care and envies those who seem to be emancipated from everything save unlimited self-enjoyment, need not feel itself unhappy or unfortunate. If God had put us here to find our highest aims met by pleasure, then indeed all care, early or late, would be an intrusion and a hindrance. But He has called us with an holy calling; He has adopted us as sons and as daughters; He is sending us forth into the world to taste sublimer joys than can ever come from mere pleasure-seeking, the strong joys of conscious growth and usefulness and acceptance with God. It is good, therefore, for you to bear in youth that yoke of responsibility according to your strength; it is the wisest, tenderest ministry upon your character; it is preparing you to stand firm in hours when all is lost unless you stand firm; to control yourself in crises where an unbridled word might create years of suffering; to maintain a clear head and brave heart, a pure and calm and loving spirit, when the whirling currents of a thousand separate cares seem converging to wrap you in their vortex and swallow up your courage and your hope.

III. But when, in preparing for the greater scenes of later life, all that human wisdom can devise has been said and done, there remains one other, one Divine word, by which to characterise the bearing of the yoke in youth—Discipleship. You are standing at the entering in of life; your history is in great part unmade; your position undefined; all is before you. Before you take the next step, whatever it may be, before you change in anywise your present status, let there be perfect silence in your heart; let the voices of the world, the voices of ambition, the voices of pleasure for the time be still, that you may hear with your whole heart that Voice which speaks to you at this moment: 'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your soul: for My yoke is easy and My burden is light'. I most solemnly declare to you, 'It is good for a man that he bear *this yoke* in his youth'. If at this hour of deep thought, with beating heart you are asking yourself the question, How can I be strong and good and useful in my generation? how can I realise the holy and glorious purposes which have been dwelt upon in this course of sermons? how can I secure 'the baptism of the Spirit' upon my heart? how can I accumulate 'spiritual wealth'? how can I avoid the choice of a 'bramble king' to reign over me? how can I ever win that victory in which one is more than conqueror?—the only answer in heaven and earth that will give you help is the answer of the Son of God: 'Take My yoke upon you in your youth and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your soul'. You must become a Christian. You must give heart and life to Christ. Do not think that you sacrifice any true joy or renounce any true freedom by bearing His yoke in your youth. 'His service is perfect freedom.' His yoke does not press you down, it lifts you up, lifts you up for ever.—C. CUTHBERT HALL, *Sermons for Boys and Girls by Eminent American Preachers*, p. 54.



# EZEKIEL

## TWO WAYS

'At the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways.'—  
EZEKIEL XXI. 21.

THERE are only two ways in the world for us to walk in—the right way and the wrong way. They are very close together at some points, and you may think that, after all, it can matter very little which way you take. Sometimes when travelling in a railway train you feel a little sudden jerk. Somebody remarks, 'We are passing over the points then'. You look out of the window, and the railway lines seem to have increased in number. Where there had been only two lines of rails there are now four, but still they are all running in precisely the same direction. Presently, if you keep watching them, you notice that while the lines you are travelling on go straight forward, the other lines begin to slant the least possible little bit in another direction. The space between you and these increases very gradually. It is very slight at first, but it grows perceptibly wider and wider. Then there comes almost a bend in the line; it is lost to your sight now behind a hedge. You can see its direction only by the tall telegraph poles that stand up and show themselves over the wide fields that intervene. Soon they too become lost to view, and for a few moments a little white puff of smoke floating up above the trees tells you the direction in which the train on the other line has gone; but that grows less and less, and dies out at last in the distant air, and you see and hear no more. There is just such a parting of the two ways in life. The right way and the wrong way appear to be so very close, and *are* so very close together at first, it does not seem possible that it could matter much which you follow. Let me tell you of some of these points at which the two ways part.

I. You have grown up for years always speaking the truth to your parents. You have obeyed and loved your father and mother. A time comes when you have done something of which you are ashamed. You know that the right thing would be to go straight to your parents and tell them; but you are tempted not to do so. You think it might make them think less highly of you; and you say, perhaps they will never hear about it at all. Then you are asked about it, and in a moment there comes into your heart the thought, 'I'll just this once say what is untrue, and then never again'; and you tell your first lie. You are unhappy about it; there was a great jerk to your nature then, at the point where the line of strict truth parted from the line of deception. I think, some of you, if you just think now quietly for a

moment, can remember something like that in your lives.

II. Or, again, you have grown up for years gladly obeying your parents, not only in their presence but in their absence, doing what they have told you to do, not doing anything which they had forbidden you to do. A day comes when, perhaps, you are with some very agreeable companions; you are full of joy and merriment, and something very pleasant is proposed. It is, however, a forbidden thing. The moment it is suggested you know, without waiting to think even for a minute, that your parents would not approve. But it is so nice, it would so spoil all the fun for you to say, 'I can't join in that, my father and mother would not approve'. So you say nothing. You begin to reason with yourself that perhaps it is not exactly the same thing as what they had on another occasion forbidden to you; that it cannot be very bad, when these others are all going to do it with so light a heart (if you could see their hearts you might find they were all going to do it with just such a hesitating heart as your own); and even if you do it now, and afterwards find out that it was disobedience, you need never do it again. And—you do it. There is a very unpleasant jerk again as you pass at the parting of the two ways, from the line of straightforward obedience on to the slanting curving line of disobedience and deceit.

There are a great many other points in the long line of our life where right and wrong part; those I have mentioned will, I am sure, help you to remember many others for yourselves.

III. One thing I want you particularly to learn, and that is how much easier it is to avoid the wrong way and keep to the right way just at the place where they part, than it is afterwards to travel back and resume your journey on the right way which you have forsaken. The point called the parting of the ways is, of course, also the place where they meet. Many a man and many a woman could tell you with what bitterly sorrowful memories they now look back to that place. How easy it would have been then to have said 'No!' to the temptation. How terribly hard the struggle is now, after years of indifference and sin, to recover what has been lost. Make up your minds about it while you are young. It is far easier, while your hearts are young and fresh and open to all good influences, to make your lives beautiful and pure in the sight of God and man, than it is to do so after your character has become more formed, and the chill world has cooled down your young affections and enthusiasm. I saw once, lying side by side in a great workshop, two heads made of metal. The one was

perfect—all the sweet features of a noble, manly face came out clear and distinct in their lines of strength and beauty; in the other, scarcely a single feature could be recognised—it was all marred and spoiled. 'The metal had been let grow a little too cool, sir,' said the man who was showing it to me. I could not help thinking how true that was of many a form more precious than metal. Many a young soul that might be stamped with the image and superscription of the King while it is warm with the love and glow of early youth is allowed to grow too cold, and the writing is blurred, and the image is marred.

High up amid the mountain ranges of the Black Forest, in Germany, you may see a number of little tiny streams trickling down over the rough rocks and through the dark woods: small at first—so small that the broken branch of a tree, or some fragment of stone fallen from the overhanging crag, may divert it to the right hand or the left. It seems little matter, indeed, which course the stream follows, as it sings its happy way down the mountain-side, rippling and sparkling in the summer sunshine; but just that turn decides whether it is to flow with the streams below which unite to make the Danube, or with those which form the Rhine—whether, in fact, it is to pass on and on through the warmer climes to a southern sea, or to empty itself at last into the cold and freezing waters of the north. It is so with the bright, clear stream of your young, pure lives. A very little, trivial, unimportant thing, as it seems now, may after all decide whether its tide shall be ever rolling onward towards the bleakness and coldness of despair, or to the sunnier and warmer climes of Eternal Love.

'I am the way,' said Christ; 'I, and none other.' I *am*; not I *was*, or I *shall be*, but I *am* at every point and moment of your life. I am *the way*; not a way, but the only way. I am *the way*, the way that leads to everlasting joy and peace and love.

Try and learn that lesson here to-day; pray and strive that you may never part from Him who is *the way, the truth, the life*.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 91.

### THE NEW HEART

EZEKIEL XXXVI. 26.

In the books I read when I was as young as you are was the story which I used to think very wonderful.

A certain king had an only son, and he was the heir to the throne. But this son had a great infirmity. Whenever he opened his mouth to speak, frogs and serpents sprang out. The king wept many tears, so did the queen. But the evil did not cease. Doctors were called in, but they could do nothing. Nobody was wise and skilful enough to cure the child; and people avoided him; they did not like to be in the same room with him.

Night and day the king cried in secret, 'Oh, that my poor boy might be cured!' Night and day the queen joined in the prayer, 'Oh, that the evil might

come to an end!' But it did not come to an end, and the longer it continued the worse it seemed to grow.

One day a traveller was passing through the kingdom, and as he came near the royal palace he heard the porters and people about talking of the boy and the sorrow of the king and the queen. So he said to himself, 'Should I pass by this sorrow?' So he went into the palace and sent word to the king that he knew how the boy could be cured.

'What the boy wants,' said the traveller, 'is that a new heart should be given to him, and his present heart taken away. It is in the heart that the evil is,' and this was told to the king.

And the king said, 'The half of my kingdom I give to you if you bring this cure to pass.'

But the stranger said, 'I shall not receive either silver or gold, either house or fields; but I want that your son shall come with me'. So the king and queen allowed their son to go with the traveller.

Now down in a beautiful valley lived a wise and a noble woman who was known for her wonderful cures. She had made the blind to see and the deaf to hear. The traveller placed the boy under her care, and by the wonderful skill she had the old heart was put away and the new heart was brought into its place. And then he was sent back to his father. When he came into his father's presence, he said, 'What a beautiful dream I have had!' and as he spoke, instead of frogs and newts and serpents, there came out of his mouth the most lovely rubies and pearls. Everybody was delighted; everybody wished to be beside him. And the king made a great banquet in honour of his son's return, and bade all his friends to it.

And by and by the old king died and his son ascended the throne, and in the history of that kingdom the chapter which tells of this reign is called the history of 'The King with the Ruby Mouth'.

Now I have not told the story just as I read it. I have let you a little bit into the secret of its meaning. The mouth out of which serpents came was the mouth of a child that had a heart unkind. The mouth out of which rubies came was the mouth of the same child after the evil heart was taken away and a kind heart put in its place. The serpents were unkind words and unbecoming words; rude thoughts and harsh thoughts, spoken to servants and to parents. The pearls and rubies were the loving, honest, brave words from the new, loving, honest, and brave heart. And the wise lady in the beautiful valley was the Church of Jesus, where by prayer, by penitence and by faith in Jesus the new heart was given.

You are sons and daughters of the King of heaven. Speak good words, words honest and true, words of lovingkindness to all around you. God will fulfil His word, 'A new heart will I give unto you,' to all who ask Him, and who use it as it comes to them to make others happy.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 59.

## THE DROPS OF WATER

'Then said he unto me, These waters issue out towards the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.'—EZEKIEL XLVII. 8.

I ONCE lived in an island where there were high mountains that went towering up to the sky; and steep, narrow valleys that divided the mountain ranges, and ran down from the very midst of the island to the sea. Each of these valleys or ravines had its own bright stream; in summer a little rivulet, such as you might, here and there, without much difficulty, leap across; here and there, where it grew shallower and spread itself out wider, cross by stepping-stones. But in winter they grew and increased, and became foaming rivers, deep, fierce, and terrible, roaring and rioting along their courses, and sometimes tearing up the mills which they were intended to turn, and the bridges which bestrode them. The island, I should tell you, was in the Tropics; as you know, the hottest part of this earth which God has made so wonderfully for the different needs of man. When I went there, every one thought that I was going to die, that nothing could save me, unless for the one hope of this warmer climate. It pleased God to bless the air and the mountains to me; and after three years, He brought me back to England quite well. But when I first went there, I took Jacob's words on my own lips:—

'And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give a tenth unto Thee.'

So you see that, though all are bound to give what they have to God, I more than all. I only wish I did it more!

Well, as I was once walking in one of the ravines there, I thought of this story; and that if it ever pleased God to entrust me with children, I would tell it them. Now listen to it.

But first I must tell you that, on account of the heat of the climate, the gardens and corn-fields and vineyards require to be watered with little streams. Accordingly, high up in the mountains they have built tiny canals here and there, into which the water flows; and then these canals branch off to such a garden, or such an olive yard, or such a plantation of bananas with their great yellow pods, or guavas, which are like refreshing apples with blood-red insides: and thus the water is carried to them, and the wilderness and the solitary place is refreshed.

Now, one spring morning, when everything was bright and blue, the forest on the mountain-side waving in the gentlest breeze, the birds singing their best (but the song of those birds is very poor compared to ours), the lizard basking in the sun, shining with living green and gold and jewels; a little stream

was dashing down one of these ravines. Far, far below it the sea lay calm and blue: it was hurrying there, that it might be swallowed up of the ocean. Oh, what a steep descent! how it foamed and roared and hissed along! sometimes in a real waterfall, sometimes over great rocks and a pebbly beach; very, very rarely forming a quiet little bay, green from the clearness and the depth of the water. So beautiful everything was! the mountains towered high on this side and on that; goats leapt from crag to crag: here there were bare bleak rocks, here mountain-sides covered with forests: on the one side, you are reminded of 'the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land'; the other seems to cry out, 'Oh, all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord: praise Him and magnify Him for ever'.

You know that water can be divided into a certain quantity of drops, but only a certain quantity: that is, there are drops as small as possible, and which cannot be divided into smaller. Now I will tell you what some of these drops said to each other, as they came rushing and roaring down the ravine, the steep mountains on either side, the blue sea in the distance below. They were just reaching a place where one of the canals of which I have told you branched off: the proper name of such a canal is a *Levada*.

'How troublesome this is,' said one of the drops, 'to be hurried forward and dashed from rock to rock, and from stone to stone! Never able to stop for a single moment; on, on, it must be, always trouble, always confusion, till we get down into the sea.'

'So it is, brother,' said a second drop. 'I quite agree with you. Only just look up to where we have come from! From the time we gushed out of the cavern where we were born, not one second's rest have we had; and, for aught I see, not one second's rest are we likely to have.'

'No,' said the first; 'and for my part I advise that we turn off into the next *levada*. See, how quiet everything is there! I suppose they get into the sea at last too; but then they go down quietly without being dashed and beaten about as we are, knocked to pieces on this side and on that; they have a smooth even bed made for them, and glide down quietly and gently, without any trouble, and without any noise.'

'Well, you two may do what you like,' said a third drop; 'but, for my part, the road I was intended to go lies straight before me, and I am determined to go straight forward, as I was bidden at first. You talk about the *levada*! You do not know that it leads down into the sea after all; it is just as likely to be swallowed up in the marshes. And suppose it does: you must have noticed in some of those that we have passed, how filthy the water has become, water that once was as pure, as clear, as bright, as sparkling as we are.'

And, truth to say, I never did see water so bright and diamond-like as that in those ravines. Where



it gushes out of the rock, it looks when the sun shines on it as if a basketful of precious stones were being poured forth. Whether it runs swiftly along, over comparatively smooth ground, or frets and foams in the cascade, or for a moment loiters in a little pool, clear, lucid, and green as emerald; it is as clear and pure as—what shall I say? as I could wish that you might have those jewels which belong to you, your souls, clear and pure, to present to the Merchant-man, who seeks goodly pearls, when He shall ask for them at the Last Day.

'As to what you say about the levadas not flowing into the sea,' said the first drop, 'I do not believe that at all. See how they keep along by our side. True, they do not hurry down quite so quickly as we do, but there is some way at the end that makes up for that, and they will get into the ocean all the same, and by a great deal easier passage.'

'And as to the brightness of the water,' remarked the second, 'one cannot always help that. We must do as well as we can. If the water loses its clearness for a minute, it gains it again somehow, and that is enough for me.'

'Well, do as you will,' said the first drop; 'here is what settles my resolution. Look, we are soon coming to a water-mill. I am not going to be dashed about in another of those mills as I was just now, I can tell you. And look, here is a levada that turns off all very conveniently. Let us decide to get into that; and oh, what a comfort it will be to have a little rest!'

There was once a very holy man, who had written I know not how many volumes—forty or fifty at the very least—in God's service; and great, thick, closely printed volumes they were. When he was between seventy and eighty, a dear friend of his told him that he ought not to work so hard, and that he was now fairly entitled to a little rest. 'Rest!' he said, 'Rest! shall I not have all eternity to rest in?' That is what I want you, but above all, what I want myself, to feel.

But to go on with what I was telling you. 'Pray, pray stop,' cried the other drop, 'you cannot tell where you may be going, you do not know but that—'

But while it spoke, the two that had been talking together, and a good many others, glided off into the levada, and bade farewell to their companions in whatever way drops do bid each other good-bye in. And what a difference there was in the way in which they now went on! The one tumbling and dashing from rock to rock, whirled about here, dashed into spray there, and presently caught on the great wheel of a water-mill, churned up into foam, and then sent hissing and boiling forth to pursue its rocky descent; the other gliding softly and smoothly along through a trench of squared stone: no opposition, no obstacle. But our drops, instead of the pure white pebbles over which they had rolled, now found themselves constantly sliding

over green slime, and those long clammy weeds that you see palpitating in stagnant water. Ease! yes, there was ease indeed! But was it not dearly purchased by the loss of clearness and brightness? And now, too, they perceived that the levada, which had at first kept side by side with the mountain-stream, began to bend off to the right: further and further went its course from the original torrent. And now it was clear that the levada led on to a village, and passed the middle of the narrow street. Ah! these villages are very different from ours! And presently the wanderers from the torrent found themselves mixed up with heaps of filth, exposed to all manner of uncleanness and impurity: now no longer the pure, bright stream, but dark, ill-smelling, stagnant pestiferous water. True: no trouble and torment now, from being dashed this way and that way; it stagnated in vile, foul, fever-bearing pools and puddles. Here was a change indeed; from the glorious brightness of a mountain ravine, to the abominations of mud-heaps, and decaying vegetables, and dung-hills!

Well; but we must not be too angry with our poor little drops, or wonder so much at their folly. It does seem very hard: I know it well enough for myself, and I dare say you know it also: it does seem very hard, always to have to strive and to struggle, never to be allowed a moment's rest, a moment's comfort. But then, you know, if the perpetual struggle is the only condition by which we can, as St. John says, purify ourselves even as He is pure, then I think we shall be ready, willingly to undergo it.

At last, after many an hour of lingering in this unclean hamlet, the stream found its way out again, and, though utterly polluted, entirely abominable, it did begin to flow. 'Oh, that we had never left our mountain bed!' cried one of the drops.

'Oh, how I loathe myself, and everything that is about me!' said another.

'How gladly would I suffer anything, if I could but make my way back thither!' said a third.

'Would you?' asked a long green weed that lay upon the stream. 'You will have the opportunity soon enough. You are now at an immense height above the torrent you left. Before long, the levada will lead you out on the mountain-side, right above it. You will find a gap in the side of the stonework. If you boldly throw yourself through that opening, you will fall, fall, fall, many a fathom down, dashing from peak to peak, and from splinter to splinter; but you will regain the torrent at last. But if you neglect that one opportunity, the only one you will ever have, after contracting more and more filth, you will finally ooze out into the salt swamp below, and there your moisture will be exhaled by the sun, and only the filth remain behind.'

'Let me but have the chance!' cried the drop. And presently they had reached the spot. There the sluggish stream of the levada divided into two; part continued its course as before; part with a courageous bound leapt through the broken barrier,

and precipitated itself into the torrent below. What a *below* it was! Such a huge, dizzy height! Such sharp, hard-pointed rocks! For twelve or fifteen hundred feet to be battered against these, falling through the air from one awful rock to another, and then plunging into the cataract. The two drops came together to the breach.

'Whatever it cost!' cried the one, and leapt over with the leaping water.

'I dare not do it,' cried the other; and glided onwards with the filthy stream.

Should I say *poor drop!* of that which had leapt? True, the stream that poured over the side was dashed into foam, churned into cream, blown about in the thin air; plunging at every fall into a new agony, but also at every fall, losing some of its impurity. And when once more the last leap brought it into the original mountain stream, with renewed life, brightness, and purity—yes, then the purification was worth the suffering!

As for the other drop, the levada soon ended.

The slow sluggish motion was over. The drop was now part of a stagnant pond, caked over with filth, where nothing but unclean and slimy water insects could dwell: a vile, putrid abomination; the noon-day summer sun sucking up its vapours, and dispersing them to scatter typhus about the country. And that was the end of the Two Drops!

You can explain the story for yourselves. You know that if you are to remain what God made you in baptism, it must be by a continued effort, it must be with perpetual suffering.

You know also that if you once forsake the right path, it will be ten times more agony to enter it again. God grant that you may never fall from it! But God also grant that if you do, you may, by His grace, and at whatever cost, return again to the narrow road, and finally, like the drop in my story, be swallowed up in the ocean of Everlasting Love!—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 204.

# DANIEL

## LESSONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

It is interesting to know that a *Band of Hope* existed six hundred years before the Christian era.

You will find an account of it in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel.

There were only four members in that band: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, better known by the names given them by their captors—as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

**First Lesson** (Dan. ii. 1-25).—Long ago—before the Bible was written—God made use of dreams to bring things to pass, but now that we have the Bible He does not.

A dream is a very wonderful thing. In a dream the body is asleep and at rest; but the soul is filled with people, with mountains and fields and houses and rivers and trees, with voices, with sounds.

Sometimes, not often, God spoke to His people by dreams. He spoke to Solomon in a dream; He spoke to Paul in dreams.

More frequently He sent a dream to some one not belonging to His people, that it might bring forward one of His people to explain it.

Pharaoh in Egypt dreamed a dream about ears of corn, some full, some thin; about cattle, some well fed, some starved; and God sent that dream to Pharaoh. It was to bring innocent Joseph, who himself was a great dreamer, out of the prison into which he had been wickedly cast, and lift him into the place of chief ruler in the land.

In the same way this King of Babylon dreamed a dream, and then forgot the dream he had dreamed. The dream he dreamed and the forgetting of the dream were both from God, in order that Daniel should be lifted up into a place in Babylon like that which Joseph filled in Egypt.

But although Nebuchadnezzar was great, being a king, he was both unreasoning and cruel.

In that old time, when dreams were thought to come from God, learned men sprang up who gave themselves out as tellers of dreams. They were called magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans. They were interpreters of dreams. And this unreasonable king said to these learned men: 'Tell me my dream'.

Now these wise men undertook to tell the meaning of dreams, but not the dreams themselves. They could not do that.

'Put them all to death,' cried the cruel king in his rage. Put perhaps a thousand innocent men to death because he had forgotten his dream! How very cruel!

And when the king gave the order there were plenty of that class whose feet are swift to shed blood to fulfil it.

And among the number condemned they thought to put Daniel and his three companions to death, although they were neither magicians, nor astrologers, nor sorcerers, nor Chaldeans, but only harmless captives.

But it is not so easy to put to death those whom God intends to live.

So Daniel, being very brave, went straight to the angry king, and said: 'O king, do not fulfil this evil threat against innocent men; but give me time, and by my God's help I will undertake to tell your dream and the interpretation of it'.

And to this the king agreed.

Then this little Band of Hope met, and Daniel said: 'Let us form ourselves into a band of prayer. Only God can help us in this great difficulty.'

And they lifted up their cry to God in prayer.

**Second Lesson** (Dan. ii. 20-23).—Although there were only four in this meeting, yet this great deliverance was wrought by their prayer, and that is our lesson in this chapter.

And God heard the prayer of these four young men, who were very dear to Him, and He made known to Daniel both the dream and the interpretation.

And so Daniel saved the lives of the magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans.

**Third Lesson** (Dan. iii. 1-18).—But now this is worse than the dream. An image of gold in a dream was bad enough, even when unknown, but it was only in a dream.

But this image is no dream, it is reality, an unconscious image, sixty feet high, just half the height of most church spires, plated with gold, glorious in the morning sun, splendid in the evening sun.

You will ask, Whose image was it? It was the image of the king himself!

I said he was a foolish fellow, and you see a proof of it here.

But it was a serious thing for our band of four. It was against their religion to worship any image, even an image of God—still less a likeness of a man.

And when the day of the worship of the golden image came, the Band of Hope stood still.

Daniel was not present.

Their enemies told the king.

The king, being a foolish fellow, got very angry. He said he had raised these men to their high estate. He had done them so much kindness, and this was the reward!



Then in his anger he called them into his presence. Do not follow a multitude to do evil.

Their noble answer—'Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver, but we dare not fall down to worship graven images. God will help us: God will deliver us.'

But next: 'Whether or no, we will not worship the image. That would be sin, and we will not be guilty of this sin.'

That really is the lesson.

But a word in the First Epistle of John explains this: 'Little children keep yourselves from idols'.

What idols does the Apostle refer to? All idols, images of gold, and everything else that is not God.

Fourth Lesson (Dan. iii. 19-30).—How the three Hebrew youths refused to become idolators.

They cast themselves on God.

They said: 'If God will deliver us, well; if not, that also is well'.

Their duty was clear.

But Nebuchadnezzar was both a foolish and evil king. He could not bear that any one should disobey him. You know that in after-years he was changed into a beast. And the beast was already in his heart. His visage changed, and because those three had refused to do wrong at his bidding, they were ordered then by him to be cast into a raging fiery furnace.

What do you think these three lads felt? Were they sorry? Yes; life was as sweet to them as it is to you. But sweeter far was righteousness and obedience to God.

But they were cast in, they were hurled into the furnace.

But how strange! The king himself is looking on, the wild beast in him, but the angel in them.

He sees a sight that fills him with terror; he sees a fourth. He asks, Who is that? It is the angel of God.

God was with them. The eternal God was their refuge.

Then the king ordered them to be taken out.

'And he made a law that people were to speak no evil of the God whom those three young men worshipped.'

So it became the fashion to speak well of the three and of their God.

And they were set up in their old places of honour and power again.

The lesson is, *Do the right: be faithful unto death*, and God will give you a crown of life.

Fifth Lesson—(Dan. iv. 1-18).—I am afraid you will not get much in the way of a lesson, only of a Bible story, to-day.

You must think of a good many years having passed since the dream of the golden image.

During those years Nebuchadnezzar has been in many a battle-field with his soldiers, and he has won many battles. And he has heaped up gold and silver. And he has built up a great palace in Babylon; and, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar built Babylon anew.

He is very proud of what he has done.

I said he was a foolish king. But he was very clever, for all that. People can be clever and foolish both, especially if they are in high positions in life, like Nebuchadnezzar, and can always have their own way.

How his heart swelled with pride! He had got into a habit of looking very high up at the castle and palaces and walls, and also round about far and near.

And sometimes when he was being wheeled around the walls, and saw the soldiers in the barracks, the merchants in the market, the sailors on the ships on the river, and the splendid castles, he would say: 'Was there ever so clever a king as I am? or one so great?'

Well, but he had another dream, and he dreamed it was summer, and he thought he saw a tree—a splendid fruit tree.

Now that is a very fine thing to dream of.

He saw the tall stem, and the branches, and the flowers, and the fruit.

He heard the birds sing in the branches, and he saw the lambs beneath its shade; and he saw too the little children gathering up the fruit.

Then he saw a watcher, a Holy One come down from heaven, and heard Him cry aloud: 'Hew down the tree: cut off his branches; shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit'. That was an overturning!

'Hew it down, cut it to the stump; let it remain that way for seven years.

'Let the tree be wet with the dew for seven years, but without leaves; no flower and no fruit.'

That was the dream which Daniel was called upon to interpret.

But what the awful interpretation of the dream was can tell when we read the fourth chapter of the Book of Daniel, nineteenth verse to the end.

When he heard Daniel's interpretation, what must Nebuchadnezzar have felt?

To be told that the tree was himself; the cutting down was of himself! And the stump of the roots left in the earth, that too was himself.

Nebuchadnezzar, a king, was a bad king. He had not ruled by the love of God.

God bore with him long, but would now chastise him.

As he had ruled from a beast's heart, He would now send him to taste what a beast's life was.

There was but one way to escape: to leave off being a beast.

Well, the way Nebuchadnezzar became a beast was with *pride*, personal pride.

'This is great Babylon,' he said, 'which I have built.'

No more thought of God than if He had been a beast.

But there are other ways of being a beast besides the way of Nebuchadnezzar. Strong drink makes beasts of men and women.

And God sends drunkards out to live beasts' lives. And there is only one way out from it: that is, to leave off being beasts.

## A DEVIL'S ELIXIR.

There grows no vine  
By the haunted Rhine,  
By the Danube or Guadalquivir,  
Nor on island or cape,  
That bears such a grape  
As grows by the beautiful river.

Drugged is their juice,  
For foreign use,  
When shipped o'er the reeling Atlantic,  
To rack our brains  
With the fever pains  
That have driven the Old World frantic.

To the sewers and sinks  
With all such drinks!  
And after them tumble the mixer,  
For a poison malign  
Is such Borgia wine,  
Or at best but a devil's elixir.

**Sixth Lesson** (Dan. vi.)—This is our last lesson in this book, for the rest is prophecy much too difficult for children to understand.

Now you all know the story of Daniel in the den of lions; but something connected with it you perhaps do not know.

It is a story of the conflict of two religions—the heathen religion, which is man's, and the true religion, which is God's.

The heathen religion is the attempt to lift man up and make him as God.

The Babel builders made their attempt.

Then the Roman emperors made theirs.

So here they lift Darius up, as if he were God.

God's religion is, that God comes down and changes man into His own likeness.

Daniel believed that God had come down to Sinai and to Judea, and manifested His power also to captives by the rivers of Babylon.

But now we know about Christ. God comes down to the earth, and by His Holy Spirit changes man into His own image.

The heathen religion was cruel.

But the true religion is tender and loving. Christ came to die for others.

He could die, but He could not be untrue. He could not put dishonour on God.

Then there is the presence of God. He is always present.

He was in the den of lions. It was He who shut their mouths, to show that—Righteousness triumphs.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 39.

## THE BOY DANIEL

DANIEL I.

The Bible is like a garden, and almost every page is like a flower. And what we want to do is to get the honey out of the flowers. We are like the bees that go from one flower to another, gathering a little honey here and a little there. But we must go down deep to the root, and get the very best. We are the bees; let us try to get the honey.

We are going to talk about *Daniel when a boy*.

Daniel means—what? 'Dan' means *judge*: 'Dan shall judge his people'. 'El' is short for 'God'. So it is 'God's judge'.

Daniel was, I think, a very happy boy, though he had great troubles respecting his prosperity. At the time of which we are going to speak he was about twelve years old. I believe he was a relation to Jehoiakim, King of Judah; and Daniel lived at Jerusalem.

Well, a dreadful and terrible thing happened. The great King Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, and burnt up the city, and destroyed Jehoiakim's palace, and took the sacred things out of the temple and took poor little Daniel a prisoner, hundreds of miles away, to Babylon. So at twelve years of age he had this great trouble. But Daniel was to be a great man by and by.

Have you any trouble? Perhaps it is because God will lead you to be very *great Christians* some day. Therefore, now you are children, God sends you trouble that you may be great—*great!*

Life is like a book. Now, when you read a book, you read one chapter, and then another chapter; and one chapter is very sad, and you cannot understand it till you read the next chapter, and that explains it. So we must never forget this. And perhaps, when you are men and women, your troubles will be explained which you have now. So wait—*wait!*

Daniel was a very handsome boy, and he was very clever. He was 'very handsome'. Did he know it? If a girl is 'pretty,' should she know it or not? Which?

I knew a girl who had beautiful black eyes. And her mother said to her, 'Sarah, if anybody says to you, "What beautiful eyes you have got," that person thinks you are silly, and that you have nothing else—that you have no mind. When that person praises your eyes, it means that you have no mind!'

Was she right? Certainly not! She should have said, 'You have beautiful black eyes, but God has given them to you, and you must use them, and do good for Him'. It is as God makes us.

I don't care about (do you?) that sort of 'beauty' which girls and boys 'put on'—being very 'straight' or 'gallant,' like a piece of marble or wax! I like to look at a face, and be able to say, 'I could tell all my secrets to you!' That's a pretty face! I could say anything to you! That's real beauty.

Have you ever felt that when you have seen a beautiful man or a beautiful woman? I think that's real love. It shows kindness, and love, and sense. A good, kind, and sensible person is happy, and therefore 'pretty'.

I have read about the people in the city of London, who went out on the 1st of May, into the fields near London, while the dew was upon the grass; and they took the dew and they washed their faces with the dew, and thought it would make them very 'pretty'. Now, if you use the 'morning dew'—such a 'dew,' as we read of in the Book of Exodus or in Hosea—you will be 'pretty'. You will have Daniel's beauty.

He was remarkably beautiful—in a truer sense. If you are like him, you will be beautiful, clever, wise, sensible boys and girls.

When Daniel was brought to Babylon, the King, Nebuchadnezzar, wished to have some young Jews come to live with him in his palace. And he said to the master of his eunuchs, whose name was Ashpenaz, that four of these young men should come to be with him in his palace; and Belteshazzar (or Daniel) was one of them. And the King said that for three years they were to prepare for his palace, and to learn and become very beautiful. They were to eat the King's food, and drink his wine, for then they would become beautiful and fit to come to his palace. And Ashpenaz told Daniel all about it, and what a beautiful palace it was.

It was a wonderful palace. It had what they call 'hanging gardens,' one above another. I suppose there never was a more beautiful place.

But when it was proposed to Daniel, Daniel *thought about it*. That is what everybody ought to do. He thought and considered about it, and he thought it was not right, because such things would pollute him. Daniel thought he should only do wrong if he did it; so he said he would not do it. And Ashpenaz said to him, 'It is a very serious thing, and the king will be angry with me. I may lose my life; and you may incur the king's anger, and be killed!' So Daniel made a proposition. He said, 'Now try us. Give us some pulse to eat, and some water to drink, and we will live upon it, and you shall see whether it does not do as well as all these dainties.' And after examination as to whether this fare did, they were found to be better-looking than all the people who drank the king's wine and ate his dainty meats.

Now I want you to look at three things.

I. First, that evidently Daniel, when about twelve years old, did not care about **Eating** and **Drinking**. Do you? Which is master, and which is servant? Is your body the master of your mind, or your mind the master of your body? Which is it? Everybody in this church has one master or the other. How is it with you?

Daniel's mind ruled his body, and therefore he did not care for nice things. He would not take nice things at any cost—at *any cost*. Ah, it does cost a great deal sometimes!

I remember reading about a gentleman who had a beautiful house, with a garden and park. He had been a good man till he had this house and garden. But then he began to be careless, and did not care about God. One day a friend was looking at his property, and he said to a gentleman who was with him, 'How much do you think that place cost him?' The gentleman said, 'Really, I cannot tell.' 'I can tell you,' said the friend; 'it cost him his soul!' *It cost him his soul!* Ah, and you may, if you love eating, and drinking, and gluttony, go on till it costs you your soul!

Two little girls were close to the sugar-basin. One little girl said, 'I will take a lump of sugar!'

The other little girl said, 'You may be found out.' 'Oh, no; mother doesn't count the lumps of sugar.' 'Ah, but God does!' Remember that, when you would touch a piece of sugar, or the treacle, or the jam—remember that God knows. And if that little girl did take it, it cost her a great deal. Don't you run that risk; you will find it too dear!

II. I will tell you another thing. Daniel acted **According to his Conscience**.—What the rudder is to the boat, so that is to your mind. Conscience is sometimes a 'thorn'. Did you ever feel a 'thorn' when you have gone to bed? Have you ever found a 'thorn' in your pillow? You lie down upon your pillow, a soft pillow, and you feel a 'thorn'. 'I was greedy and selfish to-day. I have deceived some one. I have been proud and unkind to-day.' That is the 'thorn'. Ah, if you and I were dying, and there were 'thorns' pricking us—sins not resisted, sins not forgiven—what an awful thing it would be to have those in the pillow on a dying bed! If you have any 'thorns' now, *get rid of them!* Else, conscience will be as a 'thorn' in your pillow.

Conscience can be, and I hope is, a 'little bird singing sweetly in the bosom'. It is very pleasant then. And if your conscience tells you, 'I am trying to do my duty; I am trying to conquer myself'—then the 'little bird will sing sweetly in the bosom'. Is it your 'little bird'? Which is it—a 'thorn,' or the 'little bird singing sweetly in the bosom'?

If you want to act according to conscience, you must be very particular about thus conquering your body. I think one good thing is to get up very early. You then begin the day by conquering the body. You get a victory over the first thing in the day; don't you see that? I know the bed is very comfortable, and it seems hard to get up! But make a conscience-work of it, and conquer your body.

A little girl whom I knew said she would conquer her body and never go to the pastry-cook's again. Some one said, 'Oh, that's very fine to say that now. But when you come to look in the pastry-cook's and see all the nice things, you won't be able to resist!' The little girl thought, and then said, 'When I get near the pastry-cook's I will shut my eyes and run by!' She acted according to her conscience. Don't go too near.

A gentleman wanted a coachman, and he advertised for one in the newspapers. Several coachmen came to apply for the place. When the first one came he said, 'Coachman, how near could you go to a precipice and not drive me over?' The man said, 'I think I could go to an inch.' The gentleman said, 'You can go away. I will send for you if I want you.' The second one came, and the gentleman said, 'Coachman, how near could you go to a precipice and not drive me over?' The man said, 'I think I could go within half an inch.' The gentleman said, 'You can go away. I will send for you if I want you.' And the third one came in. 'Coach-



man,' he said, 'how near could you go to a precipice?' The man said, 'Well, that is a strange question! *I don't want to try!* I always go as far away as I can!' The gentleman said, 'That is the coachman for me. You can have the place.' Now, you remember that, and don't you try to go *too near* the precipice.

III. And one thing more. Daniel showed his Faith in God.—The first thing is, that he conquered his body; the second thing is, that he obeyed his conscience (it was the voice of God); and the third thing is, that he showed his trust in God. Faith trusts in God. Often you won't see your way. You will think, 'Oh, if I do this I shall lose a great deal; or if I do not do this, I shall be the loser.' *Trust God!* Faith is the hand which lays hold on Jesus.

There was a poor woman who lived in a very little place, in a house by itself, on a common. And somebody said to her, 'This is very lonely for you. Aren't you afraid to live here?' 'No, I am not afraid,' she said; 'faith shuts the door at night, and mercy opens the door in the morning!' Now, wasn't that pretty? Think of it. It was real faith. Trusting in God.

Little Lucy lived in the country, and she had to come into the town with her mother on business. She had never been before, and she was rather afraid. There was a number of people about, and she held her mother's hand very tightly. They came upon a crowd—something had happened; but they got safely through the crowd. Then it came on to rain; so she took Lucy to a large draper's shop close by, and left her there, while she went to finish her business. At first Lucy was very happy, much amused with the ladies coming in to buy ribbons, etc. But she got tired. She yawned and gaped about. Another little girl came into the shop, and Lucy told her why she was waiting. The little girl said, 'Perhaps your mother will forget you'. 'Oh, no,' she said; 'mother never forgets.' 'But she *may*,' the little girl replied. Lucy felt uncomfortable. That was a naughty, thought, wasn't it? Well, the time went on, and Lucy's mother never came. It got dark; the shop looked very dreary; and Lucy was very tired. A lady came in who knew her, and she asked her why she was there. On being told the reason, the lady said, 'I will drive you home'. Lucy said, 'No, thank you; my mother told me to wait, *and I will wait!*' Soon after that her mother came in. She kissed her mother, and told what had happened. And her mother said, 'That is the way to trust God'. *Faith always trusts God.*

One more thing. St. Chrysostom was a very holy man. He was brought before a Roman emperor when he became a Christian; and he threatened him. The emperor said, 'If you become a Christian, I will banish you from the country—your father's land—I will banish you'. He said, 'You cannot, the *whole world* is my Father's land. You cannot, banish me.' The emperor said, 'I will take away all your property'. St. Chrysostom said, 'You

cannot. My treasures are *in heaven*.' The emperor said, 'I will send you to a place where there is not a person to speak to'. He said, 'You cannot. I have a "Friend who sticketh closer than a brother"'. I shall have my brother, Jesus Christ, *for ever!*' 'But,' the emperor said, 'I will take away your life.' He said, 'You cannot. "My life is *hid* with Christ in God!"' There was faith.

Do you remember the three things? To conquer your body—don't care about eating and drinking. Next, act out your conscience. And, thirdly, trust in God.

Daniel rose to be a very great man on those foundations. Such a boy makes a noble and beloved man. Three times in the Book of Daniel God calls Daniel 'O Daniel, *greatly beloved*'. I hope God will say to you, 'Greatly beloved!'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### DOING RIGHT

'But if not——'—DANIEL III. 18.

WHEN Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon, three of the Jewish captives who had been taken in the war were, on account of their good behaviour and honourable conduct, raised by the king to high positions in the State. The people of the country, however, did not like this. They were jealous of them as foreigners, and they hated them because they were too just and honourable to take any part in, or even to permit, all the pilfering, and what we now call 'jobbery,' which used to take place amongst many classes of the officials in Babylon. There was no use, however, in attempting to accuse these three men of doing anything contrary to the laws of the country or which was disloyal to the king. They were all good men and true. Though far removed from their own land, they had remained faithful to their God. They took no part in the surrounding idolatry. 'Here,' said their enemies, 'is our only chance.' So they invented a plan to get these men into trouble with the king. They went to the king and flattered him very much, telling him how great he was, and that he could make all his subjects obey him, no matter what he might order. They proposed to him to set up a great image in the midst of a wide open plain in his dominions, and summon every one to bow down to it and worship it; and that if any subject refused, he should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. The king agreed to this; it gratified his pride to think of all the millions of people gathered there at a given moment, and bowing their heads in homage to the figure which he had set up. These men knew very well that these three Jews were very loyal to the king, but that they were still more loyal to their God, and that nothing would induce them to bow down to an image and render to it the homage which should be given to God alone.

The day arrived; there stood the golden image, some ninety feet high, glittering in the bright sunshine, while around it gathered the thousands and thousands of devoted but ignorant worshippers. The three Jews were not among the number. Their enemies told the king, and he summoned them to his

presence. He wished to give them a chance of escape. So he reminded them of the decree he had made, and of the terrible fiery furnace which awaited all who dared to disobey. They answered him with great respect and dignity, for, no matter how bad he was, he was a king. They said they could not do it, it would be wrong; and as to the fiery furnace: 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from that, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king!'

We know that their God did deliver them out of the fiery furnace; that with these three men there was seen a fourth, 'like unto the Son of Man,' supporting and saving them in the midst of their fiery trial. It would have been no great heroism if they had done right because they knew that by doing right they would escape both the displeasure of God and the fiery furnace. But they did not know whether God would be pleased to let them escape the torture and death by fire. They knew *God could* do so; they did not know whether God *would* do so. Far braver and nobler than the words I have told you were the words which followed. They not only said, 'Our God can and may deliver us'; they added, '*But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up'. That is, we will do the thing which is right because it is right, because it is the will of God. If it be God's will to save us from suffering for doing right, He has the power to save us. But whether we suffer or whether we do not suffer, makes no difference. We must do the right whatever happens.

The true principle is that of these three heroes. Say to yourself, 'I will, with God's help, live truly, honestly, purely, loving Christ and serving Him. God is able to bless my work, and to give me great results in life, if He sees good. *But if not*—well, all the same, I will not fall down and worship any golden image of fame, of fashion, of success, of popularity, or of anything else, no matter who sets it up or how many bow down to it.' And if you say this in your heart, and say it when you kneel down alone, thanking God for having taught you, by His Blessed Spirit, to say it, and asking for His help to enable you not only to say it but to live it, God will give you a great reward. Perhaps great blessing and success in this life, but certainly the inward joy and peace of feeling that you have done right. You will have a peace, a joy within, which these things could never give, which the want of these things can never take away. —T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 127.

## A MAN AMONG THE LIONS

DANIEL VI.

I WANT to go with you this afternoon into the lions' den. I once took a very dear little boy to see a lion, and we stood together and looked upon his magnificent head, his splendid eye; and the little boy kept holding my hand, and did not speak for some time; he was quite rapt, looking at this grand animal. After

he had thought for a long time, he said to me, 'Does that lion know God?' Does the lion know God, I wonder? I am not sure. It says in the Bible, 'The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God'. We are also told, 'These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season'. If you would give something to the lion, he would know you gave it him, and he would love you because you gave it him. But when the lion finds something to eat in the wood, do you think that he thinks, 'Somebody must have given me this to eat—I do not know who it is'. That is God. Therefore, he may thankfully praise some one he knows nothing about, for God gives it to him. Do the lions then know God? I do not know.

Now I want to talk about Daniel going into the lions' den. How old do you think Daniel was? He was over eighty years old. You know he was a boy when he was taken captive, and carried from Jerusalem to Babylon, say he was ten, I don't know exactly how old he was; then the captivity lasted seventy years, when Cyrus came and set them free. Then Darius came after Cyrus, therefore he must have been a little more than eighty; I should think he was about eighty-four when he was put into the lions' den because he would not stop praying. He loved his prayers too much, and would rather be killed than stop praying. I want that you should think what Daniel took with him into the lions' den. He took *sweet music* with him. I hope that music is playing in everybody's breast in this church now—the music of a good conscience. There is no music like it! Somebody says, 'A good conscience is the bird singing sweetly in the bosom'. Does 'the little bird sing sweetly in your bosom' to-day—a good conscience—trying to do what is right, having nothing that is not confessed, nothing that is not forgiven—a good conscience? Daniel had a good conscience, and he was cast into the lions' den for doing right, his conscience told him so; so he took that with him into the den.

And he took a *great deal of prayer* with him, and when anybody goes into trouble praying, they need not be afraid. Somebody calls prayer 'the gift of the knees'. I hope you have got 'the gift of the knees'. I have known some very silly boys who care more for their trousers than they care for God; because they are afraid of dirtying their trousers, or because they don't fit well, they only half kneel when they pray. They are afraid of their trousers—they love their trousers more than they love God.

Daniel made great prayers. I do not suppose he prayed to be kept from the lions. When prayer goes up many things come down! Do you know when a rocket goes up, it goes up one rocket, but when up there a beautiful shower comes from it—many showers of beautiful star-like lights come down! So it is with prayer. You send up one prayer, and God will send you down showers of answers. This was one of the answers Daniel had—that God would take care of him in the lions' den. So he went on with his prayers, I have no doubt, while he was there.

The telegraph is a wonderful thing—how quickly it goes; the answer comes back as quickly. *Prayer is quicker than a telegram!* You may send up your message to heaven—anything you like—telegraph it up, then at once comes down the answer from God. Daniel took much prayer with him.

And he took with him *faith, trust in God*. Faith is a beautiful thing. Somebody says, 'Faith is the head leaning on the bosom of God'. That is pretty, isn't it? 'Faith is the head leaning on the bosom of God.' That is faith! Take care you lean on the bosom of God; then you will be quite safe. So Daniel was quite safe.

I heard about a great storm at sea, and on board a ship was an officer and his wife. The storm was raging, and they were all in great danger. The lady was very greatly alarmed and was in much distress. Her husband tried to comfort her, and told her to trust in God. She was surprised at his calmness in such a time of terror, and said, 'Aren't you very much afraid?' He said, 'No, I am not very much afraid.' She said, 'Why not? We are in great danger.' The officer drew his sword and placed it against her breast and said, 'Are you afraid of that?' She said, 'No'. He said, 'Why not?' 'Oh,' she said, 'my husband holds it.' Then he said, 'I am not afraid of the storm, *because my Father holds it*'. Daniel had great faith in God.

Daniel also carried with him *the presence of God*.

I was once examining a girls' school, and I said to a class of girls, 'Why was not Daniel afraid in the lions' den?' Now what do you think one of them answered? She made a beautiful answer out of the fifth chapter of the Book of the Revelation. Think of it. It was a perfect answer. I did not think she could have made such an answer. She said, 'Because the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was there!' Daniel was not afraid of all those lions, because another lion—a greater Lion than all the lions in the den—the Lion of the Tribe of Judah' was there—that is, Jesus Christ. If you had seen the Jews marching through the wilderness, you would have met first the banner on the right hand—that was the standard of Judah. It always went first. Daniel was not afraid of the lions because 'the Lion of the Tribe of Judah' was with him. What a mercy!

I have read in history that upon one occasion, in the time of one of the European wars, one of the Duke of Wellington's regiments became frightened; they were going to turn their backs on the enemy and fly, when, just in the midst of their fear, the duke himself came in their midst, and an old soldier cried out, 'Oh! here is the duke, God bless him! He is as good as five thousand men! He is one who has never been defeated, and never can be. There is no fear for you, my boys, *the duke is here!*' They all became brave-hearted again, charged the enemy, and conquered. That is what the presence of the Duke of Wellington did. What if God is with us? *Was He ever defeated?*

These are the four things Daniel took with him

into the den of lions: he took sweet music, he took prayer, much prayer; he took trust, faith in the promises of God; and he took the presence of Jesus. That is the reason he had such peace.

I. Now Let us Look into the Den.—Have you ever seen any picture of Daniel in the lions' den? I have seen a great many; I don't know which I like best. In one picture I have seen, Daniel is sitting down, and all the great lions are playing with him, and fawning upon him, like little spaniel-dogs. I have seen another picture, where Daniel is praying, and in his prayer he is so thinking of heaven that he does not even notice the lions that are all around him. I have seen another picture, where Daniel is singing, and, though the lions are all about him, he is singing so heartily that he does not even think of them. And I have seen the picture where Daniel is looking upon the lions with such a steadfast look, as if he could command the lions, and they could scarcely move because of his eye upon them—such a beautiful eye. And I have seen a picture where he is walking about quite carelessly; he does not fear the lions, he turns his back upon them, so you cannot see his face. It is a beautiful picture, shown in the Royal Academy in London.

Which is the best? I do not know which is the best, but I am quite sure that you cannot think of anything so quiet and happy as Daniel was when he was with the lions.

It was, as somebody says peace is, love reposing. *It was love reposing.*

II. Now I want you to go a little farther if you are not tired. I want you to consider **What are our Lions?** Have we got lions, and what are they?

*The devil is a lion.* Do you remember where he is called so? Just look at 1 Peter v. 8: 'Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour'. Now, supposing you were to meet a lion, what would you do? If such a thing happened that you were alone, and a lion came up and attacked you, what would you do? Would you run away? That would be the worst thing you could do. He can run faster than you. Don't run away, you'd better not; look him firmly in the face; stand quite still, and look him fixedly and firmly in the face; that's the best thing you can do. I don't know that it would do, but they say that sometimes the eye of a man can quail, control, the wildest animal in nature. Some people's eyes are more powerful than others. Sometimes a lion will quail at the eye of a man. If you run away he's sure to kill you.

Now shall I tell you what to do if you meet the devil? What can you do? Don't run away; don't be afraid. Keep up your courage. Shall I tell you what to do? Present Christ, think of Christ in your heart. Say the word 'Christ!' It will be enough. When Jesus was here upon earth, remember, whenever the devil came near Christ, the devil was afraid of Him; the devil always said, 'What have I to do with Thee? Hast Thou come to torment us before



the time?' If you have Jesus in your heart, think of Jesus, say the word 'Jesus,' that will be the best thing you can do if you meet the devil. In James iv. 7, it says, 'Resist the devil (be firm), and he will flee from you'. Not only he cannot hurt you, but he will run away from you. That is the first thing I advise you to do when the devil attacks you. Present Christ, keep very firm.

Shall I tell you of *another lion*? It is perhaps the worst lion that boys and girls have to overcome. *Bad company*, wicked boys and wicked girls. I think I once told you of a prayer of a little friend of mine; she used to say it when she went to bed: 'O God, keep me from fire, keep me from robbers, keep me from naughty boys. Amen' It is a great thing to be kept from naughty boys. Perhaps your danger is being with wicked people, who talk about naughty things, and wish you to do naughty things, and use bad words. But you need not be afraid of them. If you put your trust in God, you will conquer.

When Luther was going to be tried at Worms, and his life was in great danger, and his friends tried to dissuade him from going, saying, 'Don't go to Worms, for there are many enemies there, and they will try, like lions, to kill you,' Luther said, 'I don't care. If there are as many lions in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs of all the houses, I will go. I am not afraid, for God is with me.'

You will meet with these lions. *Bad boys at school*. Very likely some of the big boys will put wrong things into your head, advise you to play truant, run away. If you keep with other boys, it often happens, when many boys sleep together in a room, a great deal that is bad goes on; bad words are used. But if a boy does his duty, thinks of his mother, and does what his mother would wish him to do, kneels down and says his prayers, I know how the other boys will laugh and jeer at him.

I have read of a boy who knelt down to say his prayers the first time he went to school. The other boys flung their slippers at him, and tried to stop him; but he went on saying his prayers amidst all the noises of his companions. While he was praying he felt some one at his side, and, looking down, there was a little tiny boy, the smallest boy in the room. He had got out of his bed, and had come and knelt down by him; for as he lay in his bed he thought of his mother. 'My mother told me to say my prayers. I should like to do so now, if I were not afraid of the other boys.' So he went and knelt down with the praying boy.

What a blessing that praying boy was in that room! What a brave boy he was! what a hero! Don't mind being laughed at. Boys and girls may laugh you into hell, but they cannot laugh you out of it again. You will never get to heaven unless you are bold.

There are a great many *temptations* in the way, which are like lions. If you were to go through a country where lions are, you would know they are generally to be found in high bushes, and sometimes

these bushes are full of flowers; but under the flowers is a lion. Do not be deceived. Under the flowers, in the bush, there may be a lion.

I must just tell you one story more. It happened a long time ago. One of the Roman emperors had an army called the 'Thundering Legion'. It was just at the time of Constantine the Great, when the Christian religion was spreading over the world. The army occupied a very high place. In that regiment—the 'Thundering Legion'—forty soldiers all became Christians, and declared themselves so; they were dreadfully persecuted; and when they could not be persuaded to give up Christ, this is what was done to them. In a cold country, on a very cold night, these forty men were put naked upon a frozen pond. The wind was coming down with the greatest fury! By the side of the pond was a beautiful house, lighted up with fire and candles; and in it were nice warm baths. A supper was also spread. Everything that could make life delightful was within. And this is what was said to the men, 'If you will give up Christ, any of you, who ever will, he may at once leave the ice, and the cold, and go into that warm house, and have that supper, that warm bath, that bed, and be happy. But going into that house *means giving up Christianity*. If you stay upon the ice you will die before morning. Nobody can live through the night on that ice.' Well, these forty men stayed upon this ice, and this is what they said in prayer: 'O God! forty wrestlers have come forth to fight for Thee, Grant, O Lord, to the forty wrestlers the victory.' And they continued then to pray. As the night went on, however, some of the soldiers felt inclined to sleep that sleep which if a person indulge in, when very cold, he does not wake again; some walked very fast to keep themselves warm; some were looking at the house with all its comforts. One poor man could bear it no longer; he went into the house, and gave up his religion. When he went into the house to give up Christ, the centurion, who was a heathen, but an honest man, thought to himself, 'There must be something in this religion which can make these men bear all this agony, and go to the death for the sake of Christ. There must be something in it that is quite true. I will go and join them.' So this Roman centurion, who commanded a company of soldiers, went and joined these wrestlers in the place of the poor man who had gone. And still the prayer went on:—

Forty wrestlers have come forth to fight for Thee!  
Grant, O Lord, that the forty wrestlers may have the victory!

And when the sun rose the next morning there were forty dead bodies on the ice; but their happy spirits were with Christ!—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### TRUST IN GOD REWARDED

'So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.'—DANIEL VI. 23.

CHILDREN, and young people who are pretty well grown, after having pored over the wonders of the *Arabian Nights*, have often laid down the book

with the disappointed expression, 'Oh, what a pity that it is not all true!'

Now, what I am about to tell you is not only quite as strange as anything you have ever read or heard of, but there is this additional advantage that we know that it really happened.

I shall carry you a long way off in a moment, even to mighty Babylon. You must look on the map of Asia, if you would form a correct idea of the region where the great city stood. Babylon was built in the midst of a wide plain, on the banks of the Euphrates, which divided it into two parts. It was a very ancient city, its foundations having been laid at the same time with those of the tower of Babel (Gen. xi.). Modern travellers have discovered its site near Hillah, forty miles from Bagdad.

Babylon was sixty miles in circumference, with twenty-five brass gates on each side, and a beautiful bridge across the river, connecting the two parts of the city. The king's palace was exceedingly magnificent, and he went to great expense and trouble in building an artificial mountain, three hundred feet high, to gratify his queen, who sighed for the pleasant hills of her native Ecbatana, as her eye wandered wearily over the flat country around Babylon.

There was a great excitement in the royal garden one morning, and you will not be surprised when I tell you the occasion of it. In this garden there was a den, built of massive stones, in which several fierce lions were kept, and the people had heard that on the previous night a young man had been cast into it, and left to be eaten up by the hungry beasts. Early this morning they learn, to their amazement, that he has been taken out alive. The rumour spreads rapidly from mouth to mouth, and crowds come swarming towards the place. Those nearest to the garden gate begin to point him out to the rest, crying out eagerly, and in exultant tones, 'There, there! the young man with the raven locks!' 'Yes, I see him!' another answered, 'a Jew, as is plain from his marked features.'

Well may the people press forward to catch a glimpse of him as he hurries by—a wonder worth seeing, surely—a young man who has passed the whole night in the den of lions, and yet no manner of hurt is found upon him.

Who was this young man? How did he happen to get into such a dangerous place? and, stranger still, how did he ever get out? I shall answer these questions as briefly as I can.

In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim, Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans. At first the victorious Nebuchadnezzar put chains on his captive and proposed to carry him to Babylon. He, however, thought better of this, and gave Jehoiakim back his crown, and concluded to be satisfied with the payment of a handsome sum of gold and silver every year. When Nebuchadnezzar returned home he took with him several Jewish lads of high rank, and various precious things which struck his fancy; and,

worse than all, the holy vessels used in the worship of God's house.

This sort of pillage is commonly called *sacrilege*, and, although I have no time to go into particulars about it here, I cannot help remarking that it is a sin which does not escape unpunished.

This was what is known as the first Babylonish captivity. One of the young men whom King Nebuchadnezzar thus cruelly dragged away from his native land and his kindred was Daniel—a name so familiar to us all, and one so universally honoured.

At the time of which we are speaking Daniel was about fourteen years old—a period of life most dangerous for anyone to be exposed to snares and temptations. With two other lads of noble birth he was selected to enter into the service of the king of Babylon, and they were placed in charge of the royal chamberlain, and, among other things, were taught the Chaldee language.

According to the custom of the country (the same which is observed in Turkey in our own day), new names were given to the three youths, Daniel being known at the court of Babylon as Belteshazzar.

Some of you may remember that Joseph was called by another name when he became a favourite with Pharaoh, King of Egypt (Gen. xli. 45). Fortunately for Daniel he remembered that the eye of God was on him while he dwelt at Babylon, as much as when he was with his own people at Jerusalem, and he determined, by the help of God, always to do his duty.

What a lesson here for the young persons who go from home to attend school, or to engage in business, far from the watchful oversight of parents and friends! It is often a hard and painful struggle, under such circumstances, to practise self-control and to triumph over evil; but the Holy Spirit will help all those to do it who seek for that help, as God has appointed.

Three years having been spent by Daniel and his companions in preparation for their duties at the king's court, they entered upon this new and trying position. I cannot go into details, and must say, in a few words, that the young Jew soon rose high in the royal favour, from the fact that God enabled him to explain a dream to Nebuchadnezzar which had greatly perplexed him.

Under the bad kings who appear to have succeeded this great monarch the three young men were almost forgotten, and we lose sight of them for awhile, until the reign of Belshazzar, the last King of the Chaldees.

After the conquest of Babylon by the united forces of the Medes and Persians, Daniel was busy for the two years that Darius reigned in devising plans for securing the deliverance of the Jewish captives from their weary exile. His honourable position at the court gave him much influence, and, at the same time, made him an object of envy and suspicion. We are, therefore, not surprised to hear of the cunning plot which was devised for his destruction. His enemies persuaded the weak monarch to issue a decree requiring certain observances, which they knew very well

that so conscientious a man as Daniel would never obey. According to the edict, anyone within the bounds of the kingdom, who, for the space of thirty days, should ask a petition of any god or man, except of Darius himself, should be cast into the den of lions. The king, not suspecting that this was aimed against his favourite, signed the document, and sealed it with his signet ring.

When God commands us to do one thing, and mortal man calls upon us to do another, we ought never to hesitate as to which we must obey. Daniel paid no attention to the royal order, but went to his chamber three times a day—morning, noon, and night—and prayed to God, as it had been the custom of his whole life to do. A timid, time-serving person might have said, 'I will not give up my prayers, but I will pray in my mind, while I am walking about, or after I have retired to bed, and then nobody will be sure that I pray at all'.

Daniel, however, was no truckling coward, and so he continued to kneel down when he prayed, and even prayed as he always had done before at the open window of his chamber, with his face towards Jerusalem.

This was just what his enemies desired, and when they instantly informed the king of this violation of his decree, it was in vain for Darius to try to shield his favourite. According to the laws of the Medes and Persians the statute to which the monarch had affixed his signature must be carried out at all hazards.

Daniel was cast into the den of lions; a great stone was rolled to the mouth of it; and, lest some of the Jews might come and take out their countryman from this dreadful place, the signet of the king and of his lords was set upon the stone.

And so Daniel's cruel enemies had their way, and we can imagine how the poor man closed his eyes in prayer, as they lowered him down by cords to the dark, deep den, and how the hungry lions snuffed about their prey. They did not harm him, for the angel of the Lord was there for his defence, and the voice of the Almighty One seemed to say, 'Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm!'

Daniel was safe, even in the lions' den, while the king passed a wretched night in his palace. He tossed uneasily on his couch; no refreshing sleep came to his relief, and he refused to allow the instruments of music to be brought with which they were wont to lull him to repose. By break of day we find him at the door of the den, asking, in anxious tones, whether Daniel has escaped from death. How cheering to hear the servant of God answer joyously from the depths below, 'O king, live for ever! My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me!'

Can we wonder that Darius forthwith issued a new decree, very different from the last, calling upon the people of his realm to pay honour to the God of Daniel?

The important point to be brought out is this: *the reason why Daniel escaped.* The secret is made

known in the text. It was *because he believed in his God.* Even when everything seemed against him, he still continued to do right, and left it to his Father in Heaven to protect and deliver him.

The sooner we all learn to imitate his example, the safer and happier we shall be.

God shall charge His angel legions  
Watch and ward o'er thee to keep,  
Though thou walk through hostile regions,  
Though in desert wilds thou sleepest.

On the lion vainly roaring.  
On his young, thy foot shall tread;  
And, the dragon's den exploring,  
Thou shalt bruise the serpent's head.

—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 114.

### DANIEL, THE MODEL OF DECISION

'O Daniel, a man greatly beloved.'—DANIEL X. II.

GABRIEL, the angel of God, spoke these words to the prophet Daniel. In using them he meant to let Daniel know not only that he was beloved on earth, but that he was beloved in heaven. He meant that he was beloved of God, and beloved of the angels. What an honour this was! Who would not rather have an angel say this of him, than be permitted to wear the crown and sway the sceptre of the mightiest monarch on earth?

Daniel was one of the best and wisest men of whom we read in the Bible. Most of these men, though generally very good, yet sometimes said or did what was not right. But it was not so with Daniel. All through his life—so far as we can learn from the Bible—he never spoke a word, or did an act that was not right and good. He began to serve God when he was quite young; and this, no doubt, was one thing that helped to make him so good a man. He was a very decided man. He always did what he knew was right, no matter what the consequence might be.

And so we may speak of Daniel as *the model of decision.* And we can see three great benefits that followed from his decision.

I. In the first place, Daniel's decision **Kept him from Doing Wrong.**—And if we learn to follow the model he has set us it will do the same for us. We have a good illustration of this point of our subject in the first chapter of the Book of Daniel. When about sixteen years old he was carried captive to Babylon with a number of his countrymen. Daniel belonged to a princely family. After arriving in Babylon he was chosen, with a number of other young Jewish princes, to stand in the king's palace. Among these were the three famous men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were afterwards cast into the burning fiery furnace, and came out unhurt. It is said of them that they were young men 'in whom was no blemish; they were well-favoured'—or good-looking—'skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science'. Daniel and his companions had to go through a course of instruction, that they might understand the language and the learning of the people among whom they



had come to live. And in going through this course of training Daniel was expected to eat and drink things that were forbidden by the Jewish law. Now most young men, situated as he was, would have said: 'Well, I can't help this. Here I am in Babylon. I must do as the Babylonians do.'

But Daniel did not think so. He felt sure that what would have been wrong for him to do at Jerusalem, was wrong for him in Babylon; and he decided not to do it. He made up his mind that he would do what was right, and leave the result with God. He did so, and it all turned out well. I have not time now to tell the whole story. But read the first chapter of Daniel, and you will find it all there. And you will see how Daniel's decision kept him from doing wrong.

And then we have another illustration of the same thing farther on in Daniel's history. In the meantime he has risen to be the greatest man in the kingdom of Babylon. A man in such a high position always has some people about him who envy him, and become his enemies, just because he is so much better off than they are. And Daniel had a number of enemies of this kind. They envied him, and hated him, for no other reason than just because he was so good, and so great. They tried to find some charge to bring against him. But he was so honest, so true, and so faithful in all his duties that they could not possibly find anything against him.

Then they determined to get up a charge against him on account of his religion. They knew how regular he was in praying to God, and they thought that they could succeed against him here. So they got the king to pass a law that no man should pray to any god for thirty days; and that if anyone did so he should be cast into the den of lions. The law was passed. Daniel knew it. But he decided not to mind it. To stop praying to God was a wrong thing, and he determined not to do it, even though the consequence must be that he would be cast into the den of lions. He had been in the habit of praying to God three times a day. He kept on doing this just the same as before. His enemies rushed into his chamber and found him on his knees. They accused him to the king of breaking the law. He could not deny it. The king was sorry, for he loved Daniel very much. He tried all he could to save him; but that was impossible. So Daniel was cast into the den of lions. But God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths, and they did not hurt him. The next morning he came out of the den safe and unharmed. And here we see how Daniel's decision kept him from doing wrong.

*Decision in telling the truth.*—We find this story in Persian history. A little boy named Abdool Kader had a dream one night, which made him feel that he must devote himself to the service of God. The carrying out of this dream would make it necessary for him to visit the sacred city of Mecca. The next morning he went and told his mother about it.

'She wept,' he says, 'when I told her of my dream,

and where I was going. Then taking out eighty dinars, she said: "This is all the family inheritance that remains to be divided between you and your brother. I give you forty dinars, which is the portion belonging to you. And now, promise me faithfully that wherever you go, and whatever happens to you, you will never tell a lie." I promised her faithfully. Then she bade me farewell, saying: "Go, my son; may God bless you, and permit us to meet again".

"Then I started on my journey. All went on well, till one day our caravan was attacked by a large company of horsemen. One after another they plundered all our companions. At last one of them came to me. 'Little fellow,' said he, 'what have you got?'

"Forty dinars," said I, "sewed up in the border of my coat."

"The man laughed, and went away, thinking, no doubt, that I was joking with him.

"Then another man came up to me. He asked the same question. I gave him the same answer, and he too went away.

"Then I was taken into the presence of the chief of the band, who was sitting under a tree. "What property have you got, my little fellow?" he asked.

"I have told two of your men, already," I replied, "that I have forty dinars sewed up in the border of my coat, but they did not seem to believe what I said; and now, sir, I tell you the same."

"He ordered the border of my coat to be ripped open, and there he found the money. He was very much surprised, and turning to me, he said: "And how came you, my young friend, to speak so plainly about your money that had been so carefully hidden?"

"Because," I replied, "before leaving home, I promised my mother that I would never tell a lie; and now, whatever happens, I cannot break that promise."

"Brave boy!" said the robber. "Can it be that you have such a sense of your duty to your mother, at your early age, and yet I, at my age, am unmindful of the duty I owe to my God? Give me your hand, that I may swear repentance upon it."

"A number of the band, impressed by his words and example, did the same.

"You have been our leader in doing wrong," they said to their chief, "now be our leader in trying to do right."

And so, the example of that brave boy, and his decision in telling the truth, was the means of turning those robbers from their wrongdoings.

**II. The Second Great Benefit Daniel found in his Decision was, that 'It Helped Him to do Good'.**—When he was a young man in Babylon, Daniel had three warm friends with him. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They saw the decided way in which he acted, when he refused to eat or drink anything that was forbidden by the law of Moses. Those young men admired Daniel's conduct on that occasion. They resolved to follow his example. They learned the lesson of decision then, and they never forgot it.

And nobly indeed they practised that lesson in after years.

The time came when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, set up a golden image. At the same time he passed a law, requiring that everybody should fall down and worship this image, when they heard the instruments of music play; and stating that if any persons refused to do this, they were to be cast into a fiery furnace, and be burned to death.

These friends of Daniel had never forgotten the lesson of decision which he taught them so long before. They made up their minds that, whatever the consequences might be, they would not bow down and worship this image. The instruments of music sounded. All the rest of the people fell on their faces and worshipped the golden image. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood upright in their places. They refused to keep this law of the King of Babylon, because there was a higher law of the King of heaven which forbade them to do any such thing.

The case was reported to Nebuchadnezzar. They were brought before him. He asked them if they were ready, when the instruments of music should sound again, to fall down and worship his golden image? They said decidedly, 'No; we cannot do it'. Then he ordered his servants to make the furnace seven times hotter than usual, and to throw these men in. They did so. But God wrought a miracle for their preservation. He took away from the fire its power to hurt them. It just burnt the cords by which their limbs were bound, and then they walked up and down, amidst the roaring flames of the furnace, with as much ease and comfort as if they had been walking in a garden of roses.

The king looked on with unspeakable amazement. He called them out of the furnace. They came out. Not a hair of their heads was singed; and even the smell of fire had not passed upon them.

This event, so strange, so wonderful, converted the king from his idolatry; and led him to publish a law, through all his vast dominions, in favour of the one true God whom Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worshipped. And all the good done by these three men to the King of Babylon, and the people of his dominions, followed from the example of decision which Daniel set when he was a young man.

Here is a story about the decision of a young lady in standing up for Jesus, and of the good that followed from it.

At a fashionable evening party, some time ago, a young physician was present. He spoke of one of his patients who was in a very dangerous state. 'I am very much annoyed,' he said, 'by some Christian people, who are all the time talking and praying with him. I wish these people would let my patients alone, and mind their own business. What's the use of all this fuss? Death is only an eternal sleep. The religion of Christ is all a delusion; and Christian people are simply mistaken.'

A young lady, one of the gayest of the party, was sitting near, and heard all he said.

She at once answered him, saying: 'Pardon me, doctor, but I cannot hear you talk thus, and remain silent. I am not a professor of religion myself, and I never knew anything about it by experience. But my mother was a Christian. Times without number she has taken me to her room, and with her loving hand upon my head has prayed that God would give her grace to train me for heaven. Two years ago my precious mother died, and the religion which she loved in life sustained and comforted her in death. She called us to her bedside, and with her face all radiant with glory, she asked us to meet her in heaven. And now,' said the young lady, her voice choking with deep feeling, 'can I believe that this is all a delusion? Does my mother sleep an eternal sleep? Will she never wake again on the morning of the resurrection? Shall I see her no more? No; I cannot, I will not believe it.' Here her brother tried to quiet her, for, by this time all the company had gathered round her, and were listening to her earnest words. 'No,' she said; 'brother, let me alone. I must defend my mother's God, and my mother's religion.'

The physician made no reply, but soon left the room. He was found shortly after, walking up and down an adjoining room, in great distress of mind. 'What is the matter?' asked a friend. 'Oh!' said he, 'that young lady is right. Her words have pierced my soul like an arrow. I, too, must have the religion I have despised, or I am lost for ever.' And the result of that conversation was, that both the young lady and the physician became earnest Christians, and spent all their days in doing good to those about them.

And here we see how much good was done by the decision of that young lady, in so nobly standing up for Jesus, and the truth as it is in Him.

**The Third Great Benefit which Daniel found from his Decision was, that 'It Made Him Successful'.**

—He went to Babylon a poor boy, about sixteen or seventeen years old. But God blessed him for the decided way in which he always did what he believed to be right. And this blessing brought success to Daniel, as it will do to anybody on whom it rests. He rose to one higher place after another, till he got to be—next to the king—the chief man in the nation. In the sixth chapter of Daniel we read: 'It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was the first. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.' And when we see Daniel rise to so high a position as this, we realise how very successful he was. And he continued to occupy this honourable position, under the reign of four successive Kings of Babylon. That was very remarkable. This

shows us how wonderful the success was which followed Daniel's decision.

*A little boy's decision.*—One day a small boy entered a store. The merchant looked at him, and asked, 'Well, my little man, what will you have to-day?'

'Oh, please, sir, mayn't I do some work for you to-day?'

'Do some work for me, eh? Well, what sort of work can a little chap like you do? Why, you can't look over the counter.'

'Oh, yes, I can, and I'm growing, please, growing very fast—there now, see if I can't look over the counter!' said the little fellow, raising himself up on his tiptoes.

The merchant smiled, and then came round to the other side of the counter.

'I thought I should have to get a magnifying-glass to see you; but, I reckon if I get close enough, I can find out what you look like.'

'Oh, I'm older than I'm big, sir,' said the boy. 'Folks say I'm very small of my age. You see, sir, my mother hasn't anybody but me; and this morning I saw her crying because she couldn't find five cents in her pocket-book. She thinks the boy that took the ashes stole it—and—I—haven't—had—any breakfast, sir.'

Then his voice choked, and his blue eyes were filled with tears.

'I reckon I can help you to some breakfast, my little fellow,' said the merchant, feeling in his vest-pocket. 'Here—will this quarter do!'

The boy shook his head, saying:—

'Thank you, sir, but my mother wouldn't let me beg, or take money, unless I did something for it.'

'Indeed!' said the gentleman. 'And where's your father?'

'He went to sea in the steamer "City of Boston". The vessel was lost, and we never heard of him after that.'

'Ah! that was bad. But you are a plucky little fellow, and I like you. Let me see,' and then after thinking for a few moments, he called out to one of the clerks, 'Saunders, is the cash boy No. 4 still sick?'

He died last night, sir,' was the reply.

'Ah! I'm sorry to hear that. Well, here's a little fellow that can take his place. What wages did No. 4 get?'

'Three dollars a week, sir,' replied the clerk.

'Well, put this boy down for four dollars a week.' Then turning to the astonished boy, he said, 'There, my little fellow, go up to the clerk yonder, and tell him your name, and where you live; and then run home and tell your mother you've got a place at four dollars a week; come back on Monday morning, and I'll tell you what to do. Here's a dollar in

advance; I'll take it out of your first week's wages. Now go.'

Little Tommy darted out of that store like an arrow. How he flew along the street! How nimbly he mounted the creaking stairs that led to his mother's room! As soon as he entered it, he ran across the room, clapping his hands, and jumping up and down, and crying out: 'Mother! mother! I'm took!—I'm took! I've got a place at four dollars a week. There's the first dollar to get something to eat with. And don't you ever cry again; for I'm the man of the house now!'

But Tommy's mother did cry then. And how could she help it? She took the little fellow in her arms, and pressed him to her bosom. She wept tears of joy over him; and then she kneeled down, and thanked God for giving her such a treasure of a boy. Now here we see how decided little Tommy was in doing what is right; and what success followed his decision.

I have just one other story to tell. We may call it—

*The story of a grasshopper.*—If you ever go to London, of course, among the places of interest there, you will visit the public building known as 'The Royal Exchange'. There is a cupola at the top of that building. Rising from that cupola is an iron rod, with a huge grasshopper on it, for a weather-vane. And there is an interesting story connected with that grasshopper. It is this: One day, more than three hundred years ago, a mother in England had an infant, a few months old, which she wanted to get rid of. So she wrapped it up in a shawl, and laid it down under a bush in a field, and left it there to die, unless somebody should find it, and take care of it.

Shortly after, a little boy was coming home from school. As he passed by the place he heard a grasshopper chirping in the field. He stopped a moment to listen to it. Then he climbed over the fence to get it. But just as he was about to catch it he caught sight of the baby, which was close by. He let the grasshopper go; and taking the baby in his arms, he carried it home to his mother. She took charge of the baby and brought him up. He turned out to be a good, pious boy. He was always decided in doing what he knew was right, and in not doing what was wrong.

When a young man he went to London, and entered into business there. He was successful in business, and became rich. He was not only rich, but great. He was knighted, and is well known in English history as Sir Thomas Gresham. The Royal Exchange was built in honour of him. And he had the grasshopper put as a weather-vane on the top of it, in memory of the wonderful way in which, when an infant, his life was saved by the good providence of God.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 240.



# HOSEA

## HALF-BAKED

'Ephraim is a cake not turned.'—HOSEA VII. 8.

This is a strange text, but there are so many strange people in the world that odd words are sometimes needed to reach them. God speaks to people in ways they shall understand: to scholars He speaks scholarly, which is always simply; to shepherds He speaks as a Shepherd; and He breaks up great truths into little portions for children. Many might not understand about stars, or geography, or history, but all can understand about a *cake*. You can!—very well, too! Suppose you saw a nice-looking cake in a shop window, and bought it, but found when you took the first bite that it was nasty—brown and beautiful on the one side, but damp and doughy on the other—then you would say that it was a cake that had not been turned while baking. It was only half-baked, and you would say it was a deceit. There are people like that: they look so beautiful and good when in church, or when they want you to see them at their best, but when you come to *try* them, they are anything but pleasant. They are cakes not turned.

Here is a boy, for example, who has to learn five questions by heart, with their answers. But he thinks he will get off easily if he learns only the fifth question and its answer, and places himself the fifth in the class. But when the master comes, he *begins* with him; and he cannot tell the first or the second question, or any one but the fifth. He is a cake not turned; he pretended he had learnt all, but had not. He was deceiving.

Here, again, is a girl; she has got some sewing to do, and when she is asked if she has done it, she says she has. Yes; but how? With great wide stitches, an inch or two long, when they should have been closer together than the teeth of a comb. She is a cake not turned.

Jesus was once speaking of this kind of thing, and took cups and saucers for His text. 'Be thorough,' He said, 'never deceive; if you pretend to wash the cups and saucers, wash them both inside and out. Do not wash the outside only, and make-believe about the inside. And do the same with your characters. If you pretend to be good, then be good, inside and out—in your heart and your thoughts, as well as in your appearance.'

And that is what this cake is meant to teach—Be thorough; do not try to appear to be what you are not. When you are very sick and ill, and your face is pale, and you are in danger of dying, the doctor does not come and say, 'Ah! you do not *look* well, we must make you look better,' and then begin to paint your face, so as to give you the colour of health. If he only did that, you would die with the paint on your face! But the doctor is wiser, and tries to make you well inside; once he succeeds in doing that, you

soon come to look well outside. He makes you healthy, and then you seem healthy. And that is always the best way to seem good—by being good. What is the good of seeming good if your thoughts are bad, and if you like in your heart to listen to naughty stories, and to repeat wicked words? God can see what is within as clearly as He can see what is without; and though you might look well in the eyes of others, God can see when you are only as a cake not turned. Try to be thorough in everything, inside and out, and through and through.

Sometimes you say, 'I would like to be good and true, and love Jesus rightly, only I would like first of all to do *this* thing, though it is bad, or go to *that* place, though it is wrong, *if—if—if!*' That reminds me of an old Cornish fisherman we shall call John Brand, for, I am sorry to say, I have forgotten his real name. The fishing had not been good for some days, the water had been wild and stormy; but at length, on the Sabbath, the weather became fine, and the other fishermen said: 'We would wish to keep the Sabbath—but—we have had so few fish lately; and we are sorry to go out to-day—but—the weather is so good. It is a pity; we would not go if we were not so poor.' 'What!' said honest John, 'are you going to break God's laws with your *ifs* and *buts*? Better be poor than be wicked. My religion is not the kind that shifts with the wind. "Thou shalt remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"—that is enough for me.'

So he persuaded them, and they took his advice, and spent the day in worshipping God. And it was well they did so; for that night, just when the boats would have been coming back, a terrible storm suddenly burst over the deep, and lasted two days. Any boat out in that weather would certainly have been wrecked. But two days after, the beautiful weather returned, and more fish were taken then than had been caught for weeks before.

No; no one ever yet lost by obeying God. Be you like John Brand; be thorough, honest, and God-fearing in and out; do not have a religion like a weather-cock that shifts with the wind, or one that can be broken with an *if* or a *but*.

God sees you always, and sees you altogether. A great sculptor in Greece, long ago, made a statue that was to be set on a high column, yet he was as particular about the hair on the top of the statue's head as about all the rest. 'Why should you take such pains about that?' some one asked him; 'for no man will be able to see the top of the head when the figure is on the column.' 'No,' said the sculptor; 'but *God will see it.*'

Be true in heart if you would be true in life, for it is out of the heart the life comes.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Churchette*, p. 252.

## KICKING CALVES

'Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off'; or (as the words have been rendered), 'Thy calf hath kicked thee. O Samaria: or even, 'Thy calf, O Samaria, hath kicked thee off.'—HOSEA VIII, 5.

Look at some calf-worshippers, then, and mark how their god treats them.

I. Take, for instance, the greedy boy who puts no restraint on his appetite; who lings not so much for food as for forbidden food, or for those richer kinds of food which are not wholesome for him. To gratify his appetite, he will do things which are mean, selfish, wrong. And, at last perhaps, he has his will, gets what he wants, and eats till he can eat no more. What follows? Stomach-ache, headache, sickness, the doctor, with his potions and his pills. That is to say, the calf which Little Glutton worshipped has kicked him, and kicked him in his tenderest part, just where he feels it most. He who would always be eating if he could, turns sick at the very smell of food. He who craves nothing but rich savours and sweet juices, is dosed and drenched with nauseous drugs. And it will be well for him if he takes the warning, and so gets off with a mere kick or two. For if he does not, the greedy boy will grow up into a greedy man, pampering and gorging his appetite, making, as St. Paul says, his belly his god, until at last his calf kicks him off into all the miseries of incurable indigestion, or even into the dust and ashes of a premature grave.

Or take the case of a vain foolish girl, who gives herself great airs when she goes to a new school, talks big about her 'pa' and her 'ma,' her home, her servants, her dresses, her friends, her pony, or 'our carriage'; seeks in all ways, in short, to draw attention to herself and to lift herself above the heads of her companions. When she is found out, her fibs detected or her foolish self-complacency resented and exposed, may we not say that her calf has kicked her, humbled her to the dust, so that she who wanted to be admired is despised, and, instead of being raised above the level of her fellows, is thrust down below their level? Her sin has found her out, has wrought its own punishment, we say. But let us also say, and remember, that, in the strange mercy of God, she has been punished by and for her sin in order that she may learn what an ugly sin it is, learn to hate and to renounce it. Let us remember that, by her very punishment, God is seeking to save the vain foolish girl from growing up into a still more vain and foolish woman, and thus to spare her a still deeper humiliation and shame.

II. Not only the base passions which all reasonable men condemn, but also our best affections, our plainest duties, may be exalted into the place of God, and thus be turned into calves which will only too surely kick us, or kick us off, before they have done with us.

The first thought with most of you young men is, I suppose, how you are to earn your bread, by what kind of labour and service you are to secure your-

self a livelihood and a suitable place in the world. And when you have chosen your vocation, you, very properly, trust to your industry, your intelligence, your energy, your fidelity to the duties confided to you, to make your way, to rise in the world, to secure a competence, if not a fortune. In this you do well. It is your plain and obvious duty to earn your daily bread by daily toil; and to look for success in life to your devotion to the duties entrusted to you, and to the intelligence and the diligence with which you discharge them. But as you go on, and get on, you may be tempted to snatch at success by taking some mean advantage of your fellows, or by some base compliance with the base humours or habits of those who employ you, or by adopting some dishonest trick of the market, or by in some way staining your integrity, defiling the clear honour of your soul, and so violating the allegiance you owe to your principles, your conscience, your God.

On the other hand, you may preserve your integrity untouched; but, while you do nothing that men call mean and base, you may suffer mere success in business to absorb all your energies; you may come to regard it as 'the chief good and market of your time': you may pursue it with an ardour which will compel you to neglect, not only the culture of your mind and the best and purest affections of the heart and home, but also your public duties as a citizen, the worship of the Church, the service of Him to whom you owe all you have, and to whom alone you can look for comfort in your griefs, for support in death, for life and peace beyond the grave.

In either case, if you yield to these temptations, you will have turned what was once a clear duty, a duty which you owed to God and man, into an idol, into a calf such as that which of old men worshipped in Samaria. And your calf will kick you, as it kicked them.

III. Finally, let me remind you that all these foolish and hurtful idolatries of ours spring from our false conceptions of God, and of what He requires of us. The greedy boy thinks to be happy if only he can fill his greedy mouth; and the vain foolish girl thinks she shall have nothing left to desire if she can only indulge her self-conceit. But they could not possibly think so if they knew that God is really ruling their life, and understood what His plan for them is, and what is the end He would have them pursue. And if they knew God aright, neither could the lad just launched in business assume that success in business is to be obtained by doubtful means, or that it could possibly satisfy him if it were attained; nor could the maiden dream that by following the bent of a strong affection in the teeth of duty she could enter on a happy life. The true ends of life, the highest ends, do not lie here—in mere worldly success, or even in gratified affection. A man may live and die poor, a woman may live and die alone, and yet may have both found and enjoyed the chief good of human life, may yet have reached and rested in its true end.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 163.

# JOEL

## TEMPTATION

'Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children.'—JOEL II. 15, 16.

CHILDREN as well as older people have to keep Lent.

It was commanded that the Jewish children should be gathered when a solemn fast was to be kept, so how much more must Christian children take their share in keeping Lent!

You might be surprised that, when God commanded the Prophet Joel to call the people together to keep a fast, He should command 'Gather the children'; but when Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh to repent of their sins, even the *animals* were made to fast.

It is hard to understand why the animals should be made to fast, for they could not have sinned against God. But God had good reason for commanding 'Gather the children,' for it could not be said that they had never sinned.

So when God tells us now that we must all be sorry for our sins, and spend time in prayer to overcome them, the children cannot be left out; for even they have their sins to repent of and to overcome.

When Elisha was travelling from Jericho to Bethel 'There came forth little children out of the city,' and what did they do? They mocked him?

Yes, and God was very angry with them and sent two bears which killed forty-two of those children. This shows that they knew better or God would never have punished them so severely. You must be very thankful that God gives you time to repent. But you see how displeasing to God even the sins of little children are. So you children must make a special effort during Lent to overcome your sins, and if you pray to God He will help you.

Make some simple resolution, to overcome that sin that you know you are most subject to, and pray about it every day of Lent.

Lent will not leave you where it found you; so, if you are not nearer to Jesus at the end of Lent, you will be further from Him. I don't mean that you must *only* fight against that sin during Lent, but as long as you are tempted to it. You must go on until you have overcome it, however long it may take.

I told you once about some races held near Corinth. Do you remember what I told you a man did, if he fell down while he was running?

He got up again at once, and went on running.

Yes, and it is the same in the race you are running. If you have a fall you must not give way to despair, but you must pray to God to help you to do better, so that you may get safely to the end of your

race, and win your prize. You must not only begin Lent well, but go through Lent well, right to the end. You remember how well Jesus went through that struggle with Satan in the Wilderness, without ever giving it up. How hard then we must try to overcome those sins of ours!

Think what pain even your sins caused Jesus to bear. It was just those little sins of yours that caused the nails to be driven into His hands and feet on the cross. How much He must love you if He could bear all this pain for you! Would you like to crucify Jesus again? No.

No, I am sure you would not; but I want you to remember, that each time you give way to sin you cause the dear Saviour as much pain as if you actually nailed Him to the cross; while each time you resist temptation you are helping Him to bear His cross, like Simon, because you are saving Him from the pain that sin would have caused Him if you had given way to it. If you really love Jesus you will try hard to overcome your sins, because of the pain they cause Him; but could you overcome all your sins at once. No.

No, you have to overcome them gradually. We have to overcome our sins just one at a time.

Perhaps before many days or even many hours have passed you will have given way to that very sin you resolved to give up. But even then you must not give up in despair.

Perhaps you have heard the story of the King of Scotland and the spider. He noticed a spider trying to get to the top of the wall. When it had almost got there it fell down to the ground, but it did not give up in despair. The king became interested. He saw it try to get to the top of the wall eight times over, but each time it fell to the ground. It tried again, the ninth time, and succeeded. Then the king concluded that he should be conquered by his enemies eight times and would conquer them the ninth time. He did conquer them the ninth time, and reigned long and gloriously after that.

Now, I want you to think about that spider, in your attempts to overcome your besetting sin this Lent. You may not completely conquer it at the ninth attempt, or even at the ninety-ninth, but if you go on praying to God about it, you will conquer it at last.

God promises that you *will* be victorious over sin; He says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'. He does not say *how many times* you will have to ask, or seek, or knock, but He *does* promise to you that 'Every one that asketh receiveth, and



he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened'.

The Saints would never have conquered their sins and reached Paradise if they had given up in despair.

Jesus loves those who try to love Him, and He will always help them. What strength Jesus gives you older girls in Holy Communion to resist temptation! I hope you will spend Lent in such a way that you may make your Easter Communion loving Him more.

I hope you will all begin at once with the resolve to fight against your besetting sin this Lent.

Ask God to help you not to fall; but if you do fall, ask Him to help you to rise again so that you may share in Jesus' Resurrection on the great Easter Day in your home beyond the grave.

No home on earth is like it,  
Nor can with it compare;  
For every one is happy,  
Nor could be happier there.

—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 197.

### THE VALLEY OF DECISION

'The day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.'—JOEL III. 14.

I REMEMBER how this text struck me when I was a little lad. Children have a strange way of mixing up things, and I came to think of these words as in some way connected with a place to which I should like to take you all, near to my native town, in the far west of this country. Away out on those wild cliffs, with the fierce Atlantic rolling in upon them, there is a valley which came to be in my mind a sort of 'Valley of Decision'. You left the little town and turned through some fields; then came out again upon the road and under some pleasant trees; again through fields and lanes, over marshy places, and past a muddy red river flowing from the mines and rolling down to the sea; then by a mill with its dripping wheel covered with bright green moss, and the wet wall green with ferns. You had to climb a steep hill, and at the top of it stepped upon the moorland, golden with the scented furze, purple with heather, and green and brown with the hardy bracken. Away over that still moor, far from the haunts of men—where you might go for days together and scarcely see anyone but the shepherd and his dog—you would, if you knew just the right place, go down a little path by a shining stream, and it would lead you into one of the most lovely valleys you ever saw. The steep sides of furze and heather rise high up and shut it in completely. It opens towards the sea, and far off you catch sight of the blue ocean which stretches away, away for thousands of miles, and you hear the surge and roar of its breakers rolling in on the calmest summer day. Right in the middle of the valley runs the little brook, hurrying on until it shall leap off the cliff a clear hundred feet, and be lost in the waters of the great sea below. Here let us sit for awhile, and let this be our valley of decision. The deep blue sky

is above us, now and then the kite is poising himself on a trembling wing far over our heads; or the gull goes sailing along without a beat of his white wings; or the raven's hoarse croak comes from the cliff.

I. This valley of decision is **A Place for Sober Thought**.—Look at the little stream hurrying on between the banks. Here, almost hidden under the thick growth of forget-me-nots and long grass; here, spreading out into a broad pool, catching the light of the sun and reflecting the flowers on its banks; there, narrowed into a swift river under dark bushes; but always and everywhere hastening away to the great sea. *Is not that just like our life?* It is hurrying away, always and everywhere. Laughing with pleasures, idle and happy, troubled and murmuring, life is always hurrying on. Friendships and joys cannot keep it, any more than the flowers can keep the brook. And, like it, we are going away to that great sea, Eternity. Day and night, awake and asleep, working and resting, life is hurrying on to that great sea. How are we going? Sometimes when winter torrents have swollen the stream, I have seen it go leaping over the cliffs, a black flood, dashed upon the rocks below, and lost in the angry waves. But in the summer time I have seen the little silver thread of water caught by the summer breeze, and turned into a shower of spray, about which rainbows played as the sun shot through the glistening drops, and it seemed to die in light all crowned with radiant beauty. Where is our life going? Dark, troubled, sullen, in the chill winter of the soul, going away to be lost in those dark depths? Or, is it lit up with heaven's sunshine and joy, going only to be borne upward, gently home, covered with light and rainbow hues? let us press these things upon our minds. The valley of decision is *a place of sober thought*.

II. Then again, sitting here in this pleasant valley, I am reminded that the valley of decision is **A Place of Solemn Warning**.—Just under this little valley a merry party had come one day for a picnic. One of the company, a strong young man and a capital swimmer, had slipped away to bathe. Suddenly, as the others sat singing on the rocks or were strolling on the sands, one sprang up and pointed to their friend as he was being borne away by the current. He was drowning. There was no boat near, and none could help him, and there his friends, in an agony of grief, watched him sink down under the waves, and he was seen no more. It is *a place of solemn warning*.

Another day I had been under the cliffs, and was returning with my friend, when we met a little bright-faced lad running down the steep side. When we had reached the top, we saw him, a speck far away down under us, skimming along the foaming edge of the waves. Scarcely had we turned our faces from him before a huge wave swept in, and he was borne away, struggling in vain, with none to hear his cries—just swept away and drowned. That valley came to be *a place of solemn warning*.

What is death, but the sweeping in of the waves of eternity, bearing away one and another? Day after

day, hour after hour, those about us are being swept away. Where are we? What hope have we? We too must die. Many younger than we are have died; many as young as dying every day. Death may just as likely sweep around us and bear us out to be seen no more—beyond all help. Think of these things deeply and seriously. The 'valley of decision' is a *place of solemn warning.*

III. The place further suggested **Our Danger and Our Deliverance.**—This little valley stood at the head of a deep gulf shut in on three sides by the cliff, and we could look over the sloping shoulder of a headland and see beyond it a steep precipitous cliff, in which was a huge cave, running up three-fourths as high as the cliff itself—a huge, black, rounded cavern, that went by the name of Ralph's Cupboard. Never accessible from the land, it was scarcely ever to be entered from the sea. At low water the sharp rocks rose up and blocked its entrance, and when the tide came in, the wild waves swept about it so as to threaten destruction to any that should attempt to enter it.

Its name came from the romantic escape of a bold smuggler. He was known to the coastguard men, and they had tried again and again to take him; but he was loved and admired amongst the people, and they were always ready to afford him shelter and to mislead the officers. One wild night, however, the coastguard came upon him, and surrounded him. He sprang into his boat, and pulled hard over the wild waves. But the men gained on him. Hard pressed, there seemed but one escape. There, in front of him, the great foaming waves were thundering into this cave, dashed against its sides into a shower of spray. Turning his boat towards it, he waited a moment until he could catch the swelling wave, and then, as the coastguards watched him in horror, they saw him swept into what seemed to be the great black jaws of destruction. But his confidence and courage were his safety. With a cool head and a strong hand, keeping his boat in the very middle of the cave, the wave swept him right away to its very end, and left him on the little bit of shingle beach that the tides had thrown up there.

Now, like him, we have broken the laws: we are condemned. We have sinned, and the law saith, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die'. The 'terror of the Lord' is upon us, at our heels, following us like our very shadow. The moments are hastening upon

us, bearing the evils that must come. We must perish, unless we can find some way of escape. No skill, or cleverness, or courage of ours can save us. It is folly to go on hoping and desiring, unless we can find a place of refuge. See, here it is: 'A Man shall be as an hiding-place'.

The text tells us that *when we have made up our mind, the day of the Lord is near.*

When the prodigal said, 'I will arise,' and when he did arise and go, it was not long before his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. When we set about it in downright earnest, the day of the Lord is near. In the life of Billy Bray—which many of you, I think, have read—he tells us that he had gone sorrowing and sighing for some time, until he could bear it no longer; and one night he sprang out of bed, and fell on his knees, and cried out, 'Lord, Lord, Thou hast said, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened." Lord, I ask now—give; I seek now—let me find; I knock now—open unto me. And that moment I found.' When we have made up our mind, the day of the Lord is near. But perhaps some burdened soul says, 'Well, I have sought earnestly; I have pleaded and cried to God, and no help or light has come'. Well, perhaps you have been trusting in your earnestness. Your confidence has been in your tears. Your faith has been in the agony of your wrestling. Look to Christ. Come to Him, saying, 'Lord, here I am, a poor, needy, helpless sinner. I can't seek Thee as I want to do; let me sink into Thee! Here I lie, unable to do anything of myself. I will be Thine, and I must have Thee'; so sink down in helplessness upon Him.

*The day of the Lord is near*—the day of salvation. A day—because it is *light*. The shadows shall flee away. The gloomy clouds of night shall be dispersed. The healing sun shall rise, and the night with all its perils and fear shall end. A day—because it is *joyful*. The rosy dawn touches the eastern sky, and at once earth wakes up to music; the air is full of joyous sounds; the flowers open; the dew-drops sparkle in its light, and all is joy. Ah! the day of the Lord is near, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Then we shall obtain joy and gladness. The time of the singing of birds shall come for us. Joy cometh in the morning.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 1.

# JONAH

## JONAH

**The Basket of Fruit** (Amos vii. 1).—‘Behold a basket of summer fruit.’

There are two kinds of fruit in life, the fruit of sin and the fruit of grace (Rom. vi. 21, 22).

There is a season for the perfecting of these fruits. *Now* (Luke xiii. 7).

There is a ripening of this fruit, both bad and good (Luke viii. 14, 15).

There will be gathering soon, some for destruction, and some for glory (Matt. xiii. 39).—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tivy Folks*, p. 13.

## THE DOWNWARD MAN

‘But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord, and went down.’—JONAH I. 3.

JONAH was a remarkably ‘downward man’. In fact, he was about as downward a man as we ever heard of. In this verse we are told that he ‘went down to Joppa’; and then, in the same verse, after we are told that he had found a ship, we are also told that he ‘went down into it’. He was not content, like other people, with being on deck; he must go down to the cabin, or the hold, or the bilge-water—down, down—he must go down. When the storm came on, and the cargo had to be cast overboard so as to lighten the ship, after clearing out one article and another, they came upon Jonah, and no doubt they were surprised, for the fifth verse tells us that ‘Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship’. And even then he was not standing—‘he lay, and was fast asleep’. He was down—thoroughly down—down in body and down in mind; and, in a little while, when the winds were roaring, and the waters were raging, he went down farther still—he went down in heart. It was just what we might have expected then, since he was so bent on going down, that he would get enough of it. So he was sent farther and farther down than ever. He was cast into the sea, and went down to the ‘bottoms of the mountains’—to the brown sand, and the wavy, tangled weeds in which the mountains plant their feet. He could not go much farther down than that, and by that time he did not want to go down any more. He wanted—and wanted very much—to come up.

Jonah has a large family, and they are all like their father in that respect; they have a strange fondness for going down, down—always going down. You meet these people everywhere. They started well enough, and had as good a chance as any, but somehow they soon got on the downgrade, and once they were on it they went faster and faster down and down; and now, poor things, they are

quite down—down at heels, down in heart, down in hope—thoroughly ‘downed’. What is to be done with them? A great many people settle that question in a moment by giving them another push, and helping them to go down a little farther. Isn’t that cruel? Isn’t it wicked. Isn’t it ab-om-in-a-ble? That is a big word, and I like to say it slowly, that you may take it in, and tremble by seeing what a wicked, wicked cruel thing it is for any man or any woman, any boy or any girl, to give a push to any weak one who is going down already fast enough and sure enough. Never, never do you that, or you will be doing one of the biggest sins you will ever be doing in your life.

There is something better to be done. *Put the skid on*; stop them if you can from going down any farther, and then help them up. That is good work; that is God-like work; that is the work Jesus was always doing, and the work He is always doing still, and it is the grandest, happiest, most blessed work you will ever get a chance of doing all your days. Angels cannot find anything better to busy themselves about. So, whenever you know of anyone going down, becoming poorer through some misfortune, or becoming wicked through some bad habit, do not go speaking about it to other people, and calling their attention to the one going down. That is mean, that is low, that is bad-hearted; that is forgetting to be like Christ. Do something better. Think and plan and do what you can to help the downward one to come up again.

Sometimes, poor things, they feel as if they *couldn’t* help themselves. I have seen a bicyclist on a light machine without a brake go nicely along till the way became steep, and he has thought he could manage to go down gently, back-peddalling all the way, and keeping himself well in hand. But he could not do it. Here and there there came a jolt, and his foot has slipped from the pedal, and then down, down, down he has rushed, swifter and swifter, unable to stop himself. Well for him if he got down safe! I have seen some that did not; and when they were wounded and bruised a good bit, they learned to have a little charity and a little pity for poor folks in the world that seem quite unable to help themselves from going down, down, down. Be you kind and pitiful to them all your days, and a kind heart will soon find out the best that you can do for them.

But what was it that sent Jonah down so fast and down so far? It was sin. The Lord showed him the road *He* wanted him to go on, and that was an upward one; but an upward road is always a bit stiff, and Jonah wanted to take things easy, so he left



the Lord's road and took his own, and that is always a road that leads down. God's road always slopes up. We are a bit higher to-day than we were yesterday—a bit purer, a bit more loving, a bit less selfish; and sometimes we have a bit of a stiff job to keep ourselves at it, but then—how much happier, how much healthier we are growing! Our own road, however, is always smooth and broad, and it winds about so gracefully that we never notice how it slopes down. But it does—always does; and it is not till we have gone pretty far down that we begin to find out the ruts and the mud and the boggy places. That is the way of the man or woman, boy or girl, who begins to think of pleasing himself, and himself only, and forgets what God wants, and leaves the road that God has marked for him. That one is going down, going down all the way—going down first in heart and mind, not seeing, not thinking, not caring for the pure and beautiful and noble things he saw and thought and cared for once; and then going down in happiness—the sunshine that was at

the top becomes all lost down in the hollows; and then going down in character, and down—down at last even in his own eyes. For he has found then—yes, he has found then—that it was all a great mistake. The things that promised so fair at first deceived him in the end.

Yes, take note of it, and keep the note always locked up in your heart, so as to be safe, that God's ways—God's ways alone—are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are paths of peace—peace for the heart, peace for the mind, peace for the life. Keep to them and you will keep moving upward, and *not* downward, and the good spirit of Jesus will always put it into your heart never to push another down when he is going down, but rather stop him, and help him up as best you can. As far down as Jonah went, God brought him up at last. If God can do that with one who had gone so low, *you* need not despair about anybody.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 104.

# NAHUM

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

'The Lord is good.'—NAHUM I. 7.

WE apply the word *good* to a great many different things, and the meaning which it bears depends on circumstances. You have all often spoken of a good apple or a good peach, and every day somebody is heard to boast of his good horse or his good cow.

All that good means, in such a connection, is, that the apple or peach suits the taste of the little fellow who is eating it, or that the horse is gentle, and does not refuse to pull his load, and that the cow gives plenty of rich milk.

When I speak of a child as being a good boy or a good girl, the word means much more than in the cases just referred to. The boy or girl who is called *good* must be one who is obedient to parents; one who loves God; one who is anxious to do right; and various other points which I have not time to mention.

We are apt to think of our mother as the best person in the world. A school-teacher was once telling his pupils how bad the human heart is, and concluded by asking them whether they had ever known anybody who was always good.

One little fellow, prompted by a simple childlike affection, answered, without a moment's hesitation, 'Yes, sir, I know one: my mother!'

Good as many Christians certainly are in various particulars, there is only one person who ever lived in the world, who was perfectly free from faults, and that was our adorable Saviour. Indeed, it was no easy thing (as I have no doubt you have already found out) to be even tolerably good.

More than once your mother has said to you, 'Do try and be a good boy to-day!' You *do* wish to obey her; you *intend* to do it; you succeed for a while; but, when thrown off your guard, how often it has come to pass, that you have been led to do very differently from what you had *expected* and really *desired* to do! God alone is *always* good. This is the point taught us in the text, 'The Lord is good.'

How do we know this to be true? Have we anything more than the prophet's word for it? Let us see.

1. We know that 'The Lord is good' by His works.

He made this beautiful world. It is a sort of great house for His creatures to live in. He hung out the sun and the moon in the sky, to give light to them by day and by night. He has spread a carpet of green over the earth, and variegated it with beautiful flowers.

Our ears are charmed with the music of birds, and our eyes gladdened with a thousand pleasant sights.

A little girl, ten years old, once rode up on horse-back, with a party of ladies and gentlemen, to the top of Mount Washington. All dismounted, and, standing on the rugged summit, covered with stunted, pale-green moss, they gazed about in wonder. Below, stretching in all directions, lay a silver sea of clouds, amid which lightnings were seen to flash their forked shafts, and from which the deafening thunder sounded on the ear, peal after peal, in rapid succession.

Far down beneath the travellers knew that the rain was descending in torrents, but where they stood the sun shone on them in all its splendour.

The father of the little girl, who was not troubled with a very vivid imagination, said to her, as he looked about on this grand display of God's works with a careless and indifferent eye, 'Well, Lucy, there is nothing to be seen, is there?'

The child caught her breath, lifted her clasped hands, and replied, reverently, 'Oh, yes, papa, I see the Doxology!' Everywhere about her Nature seemed to be saying with a loud voice:—

'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!'

I spoke of the world as a sort of great house, and I might add to this that it is a house full of useful things.

Men dig down into the hills and mountains, and bring forth rich treasures of iron and coal. They explore the mines for silver and gold. The waters abound in fish. Grain and fruits are produced in unstinted abundance. The industrious bees lay up their stores of sweet, of which we are always so ready to take our share.

All these, and a thousand other good things, our Heavenly Father has put into this treasure-house.

Is not the Lord good?

2. We know that the prophet gave a true statement of the case, *because of the pains which God took to redeem us.*

I read of three children who got lost in the woods, and went wandering about trying to find their way back home. They lived for a while on blackberries and roots, but they soon became worn down by fatigue and anxiety, and lost all hope.

The distracted father, with some kind neighbours, searched two days for them, and when they were found at last they were nearly dead.

And so sinners had wandered off from their Heavenly Father and got lost. God so loved them that He sent His own dear Son to search for them, and bring them back.

We express this idea very often in our prayers

when we say, 'We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep'. When we behold our Saviour in His agony, on Good Friday, we can form some faint conception of how tender-hearted and compassionate He must have been towards the ungrateful creatures who deserved no kindness from Him.

3. Again, we know that 'The Lord is good,' because *He takes such great care of us.*

A little child fell, one day, from the third story of a house to the ground below, and the nurse ran down in great terror expecting to find its bruised and mangled body, as she remembered that some large stones were lying about in the yard left there by the workmen, who had been doing something to the cellar wall. Judge, then, of her amazement, when she beheld the little creature seated between two of these great blocks of stone, playing with a flower which she had plucked from the tall grass which served her for a cushion!

Surely one of those guardian angels which our Saviour speaks of, as having a watchful care over little children, must have protected this child from harm.

Who takes care of us when we are asleep, and when we are quite unable to protect ourselves? The question is answered in the verse of good Bishop Ken's hymn, in which we ask God to do it:—

Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,  
Under Thine own Almighty wings.

This protection which the Lord extends to us is only one among many ways by which He proves that He is good.

The subject suggests three lessons, which I hope you will learn from it:—

1. If God is thus good to us, we ought to try, very hard, never to forget Him.

In olden time a great army came to attack a strong city, and they would most assuredly have taken it, but for a very curious circumstance. One night, while the besieging soldiers were enjoying their sound sleep after a hard day's toil, the mice crept in among them and gnawed their bow-strings! The next morning, when they wished to go on with the attack, it was impossible to shoot their arrows. After that the people of the city worshipped mice! This was indeed very silly, but it showed that the inhabitants did not forget favours.

We know that God is very good to us, and the least that we can do is to bear it always in mind.

2. If the Lord is thus good to us, we ought to *love* Him. When your father and mother do kind things for you, or have been very patient and forgiving towards you, although you have not deserved it, you cannot help having your heart warmed towards them with tenderness and affection.

No earthly parent can ever be half so kind and forgiving as our Heavenly Father is; and hence it would be the most shameful ingratitude if we did not show some proper appreciation of His goodness.

The King of Armenia having broken his engage-

ments with Cyrus, the indignant conqueror forthwith marched into his country, and having made prisoners of his faithless vassal and his family, gave orders that they should be brought before him.

'Armenius,' said Cyrus, when the fallen monarch came in, expecting some terrible sentence, 'you are free; for you are now sensible of your error. And what will you give me if I restore your wife to you?'

'All that I am able.'

'What if I restore your children?'

'All that I am able.'

'And you, Tigranes,' said Cyrus, turning to the son, 'what would you do to save your wife from servitude?'

The young man had lately married, and was much devoted to his wife. He answered up, with spirit, 'Cyrus, to save her from servitude, I would willingly lay down my life.'

'Let each have his own again,' said Cyrus, and all were made happy in a moment.

When the conqueror had departed, one spoke of his clemency, another of his valour, while a third praised his noble bearing, and the graces of his person. Tigranes turned to his beautiful wife, and asked, 'Did you think him handsome?'

'Really,' she answered, with artless simplicity, 'I did not look at him.'

'At whom, then, did you look?'

'At him who offered to lay down his life for me!'

Greater love hath no man than this, that he should lay down his life for his friend. Tigranes was willing to die for his wife. Even while we were enemies to Him, our adorable Saviour died for us. Surely we ought to consider Him as 'the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely'.

Once more. If the Lord has been thus good to us, *it becomes us to try to be good also that we may be like Him.*

I need not tell you that this will be a very hard and discouraging undertaking. Indeed, it will sometimes appear almost absurd to make the effort any longer; and yet this conclusion would be wrong.

You have seen a child learning to write. The teacher has set a nice, fair copy at the top of the page, and the business of the little scholar is to learn to write like it.

Alas! how very slow the progress which he makes! What a number of writing-books are scrawled through with the most awkward-looking marks, before he succeeds, in any degree, to his teacher's satisfaction, or his own!

And even after he is classed among those advanced scholars who have acquired the art of penmanship, still his best efforts will fall far short of the copy.

Just so in our efforts to be like the good Lord. We may be ready to despair, but if we are really anxious to be better, and to do better, God will help us. Indeed, He will always help those who care enough about it to ask Him.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 218.



# ZEPHANIAH

## SERVING THE LORD WITH ONE SHOULDER

'Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one shoulder.'—ZEPHANIAH III. 9.

WHAT is meant by the people learning to serve God with one shoulder? It is evidently a matter of some importance, for the writer of these words represents God as watching with desire for the time when His people should have learned to serve Him thus.

Did you ever see a long ladder, or a long wooden plank, carried through the streets on the shoulders of two or three men? Now, if one man walked in the least faster than the others, or if he walked in the smallest degree out of line with the others, the thing which they were carrying would slip off. The ladder can be safely supported only so long as each man keeps his shoulder, on which it rests, exactly in a line with the shoulders of the other men. They must do the work as if they had but one shoulder; they must all keep step, they must all proceed at the same pace, they must all walk on the same line. That is what I understand the image or illustration to be which the prophet uses here to explain to us the best method, and the only really true and successful way of serving God. We are to serve God together, and we are to serve God in unison. We are to do our work for God along with others, and we are to do it in harmony with others.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was upon earth, established or founded a Society. This Society is called the Christian Church. It consists of all persons who have been baptised. You can never too early learn that your greatest honour and privilege is to be a member of this Society. Some of you belong to old and famous families; you read in history how your forefathers gallantly served their country and their king, and did famous deeds of devotion and bravery. There is no reason why you should not be proud, in a right manly or a right womanly way, of these things. Be so proud of your family, if in God's providence you have been born the child of an ancient and noble house, that you will never do a mean, cowardly, uncharitable act, to bring shame and dishonour upon it. But there is a greater honour, a nobler privilege, which belongs to every boy and girl, and that is that you belong to the family of Christ. You are members of that Society which He founded. You are one of the brethren of the family of which He himself is not ashamed to be called the First-born Son. Jesus Christ died for each one, and, like the shepherd, calls each of His own sheep by name, and leads them out, and loves each one; but also He died for the whole flock, and loves them as a whole.

Most people who do much in the way of what we call religious work are, I believe, striving to serve God. But how much more and how much better work would be done for God if we not only endeavoured to serve Him singly, but all of us to do it 'with one shoulder'.

'Now, then, Highlanders, shoulder to shoulder!' was the cheery and inspiring word of command that rang out above the roar of battle as a gallant soldier led his Scotchmen to the charge; and every man, not for himself but for England, rushed forward as with only 'one shoulder' in the regiment, and with the irresistible might of their courage and their valour swept the broken ranks of their defeated foes before them. Oh! my friends, let us hear the voice of our great Captain ringing across this world's great battle-field, and summoning us to give up our petty jealousies and our miserably little differences. 'Soldiers of the Cross, shoulder to shoulder!' against all the evil, all the falseness, all the baseness, all the meanness, all the impurity, all the pride, all the folly, all the mighty army of sin that the Prince of Darkness has set in battle array against us.

Try daily more and more to serve God as with one shoulder in your homes. It will make those homes so much brighter, so much happier for all.

When you find the old self-will and selfishness stirring within you, just ask yourself quietly, 'Will this help us to serve as with one shoulder?' And just steal a little minute to spend in your room, to ask God to guide and bless and strengthen you in your endeavour.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 101.

## THE REST OF GOD

'He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy: He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.'—ZEPHANIAH III. 17.

THE inquiry which I wish to answer is, from what does God's satisfaction and joy arise? How is His rest connected with His saved people? I remark:—

I. **God is not Satisfied with doing Nothing.**—Think back on a time when all the things that now are had not yet been made. There were no living creatures; no men, no beasts, no birds, nor creeping things on earth; no angels in the skies. There were no worlds for living creatures to dwell in; no heaven, no sun, no moon, no star, no globe like ours—nothing. Then, however, there was God—God alone. And, doubtless, even then God was happy. But He was not satisfied in the sense of the text. He was at rest, silent in His blessedness, but not satisfied. There was something He wished to do. He longed to work.

He arose, and created. Having created, He continues to preserve. He is taking care of the universe every day. Hence our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, 'My Father worketh hitherto,' from creation till now, even on the Sabbath of rest. The old heathens could not imagine that their gods could be happy unless removed from the affairs of men. They supposed them to dwell far up above the clouds on a high mountain-top, minding their own pleasures, and letting the world look after itself, except on some great occasions which called them to leave their lofty seats, and come down to human abodes; just as there have been wicked kings who lived in their own palaces, and followed their own delights, leaving their subjects to fare as they might. But our God is not as the gods of the blind nations. He must watch over the interests of His great creation. He does not overlook the smallest part of it, nor the meanest thing in it. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him. He takes care of the world; His eye is always on it; His hand is always upholding it. I once saw what I felt to be a very daring picture. There was a majestic figure representing God, or the Son of God. In the open hand, of which the very fingers seemed full of strength, rested a globe. The meaning was, God bears up this great world as in His hand. I did not like the way in which the lesson is told, but the lesson is true. He upholdeth all things by the word of His power. But:—

**II. God is not Satisfied with mere Works of Power and Wisdom.**—Did you ever see an orrery? You know it is a skilfully constructed machine designed to represent the movements of the planets around the sun. If you have seen one, you must have felt, as you looked at it, that it required much wisdom to contrive and arrange it. But, after all, it was but an imitation of what God does with the real globes, and what he contrived without anyone to show him the plan. God made all the planets, put them in their places, gave them their motions, and made them fit into each other, so that we have a system, and not a maze of chance. In this world, too, He made all things to answer each other. The Greek and the Latin words for world show what observers long ago thought of the appearance of things around us. They signify orderly, well-arranged, beautiful. The world is indeed all this. Look at hills, valleys, seas; at grass, flowers, trees; think of air, clouds, rains; consider how they are adapted to each other, hills to valleys, herbage to both, rain to all, how useful and at the same time how beautiful they are—and then say, was not David right when he exclaimed, 'How manifold are Thy works, O Lord, in wisdom Thou hast made them all!' Have you ever thought what wisdom and skill to make things fitting and beautiful there are shown in the seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter? The poet Thomson speaks truly when in a hymn addressed to God, he says, 'The rolling year is full of Thee'. Now, when God made all these things wisely and beautifully, they were pleasing to Him. He liked to look at them. But

He could not rest in them. Otherwise He might have stopped His creating work on the fourth day.

**III. God is not Satisfied with mere Works of Goodness and Bounty.**—After the fourth day God made living sentient creatures. All of these were capable of feeling pleasure, and enjoying happiness after their kind. He made a great many sorts of them. He made some to fly about in the air, some to roam about on the land, some to swim through the waters of rivers, and lakes, and seas. Have not you seen birds and beasts quite evidently happy? You have found it pleasant, have you not, to look at lambs or other young animals frisking and gambolling about? Now, doubtless, it gave God pleasure to make such creatures, and to see them happy. Besides, He had made angels before who should be able to know, and love, and serve Him. He made man, also, rational and capable of seeing His glory, and speaking of it. In the happiness of angels and men He has great delight. He likes to hear their voices and to see their works. It is very pleasant to Him to talk with them. Just as the father of a family, sitting in the midst of his children, likes to hear them asking questions, and thanking him for his care; likes to see them growing in knowledge and loving one another, so God has pleasure in the joys and services of holy angels and men. You recollect that when God had finished His six days' work He beheld, and lo, all was good; and then He rested on the seventh day. He was thus far satisfied. He rejoiced over a holy unfallen world. But He had a deeper happiness, a fuller rest, than even this. The highest Sabbath was not yet.

**IV. God is not Satisfied with Works of Justice and Judgment.**—After God had made the angels a number of them sinned, and He cast them out of heaven. When Adam sinned He drove him forth from paradise. He has said that He will banish wicked men from His presence and the glory of His power. He has often brought destruction on vile and bad men in this world. He drowned the whole race once for their iniquity, saving only Noah and his family. He rained fire and brimstone, in awful storm, on the cities of the plain. He brought the waters of the Red Sea on the host of Pharaoh, when hardened hearts they pursued the people of Israel. He destroyed Jerusalem, after it rejected Jesus, with a very terrible overthrow. Now, there is a satisfaction to God in thus visiting sin with its due punishment. In a passage of one of the prophets He speaks of great judgments as being a sacrifice, satisfying His justice. But this is not the rest of delight. It is the rest merely of relief. It is ease from a burden. God uses this very way of speaking Himself. He says, in Isaiah, 'Ah! I will ease Me of Mine adversaries'. The history and condition of the Jewish people may be adduced to illustrate this. God has thrown them off for their rejection of His Son, as a load He could no longer bear. But He has not yet done with them. Relieved from them, He yet remembers them. He will by and by rest in His love over them, bringing

them back with songs of joy. This brings me to remark:—

**V. God is Satisfied with Works of Love and Mercy.**—He will save, says the text. Then He will rest. Of old He called the land of Canaan His rest, because He there finished His work of leading Israel out of the house of bondage, and through the wilderness into promised habitations. The earthly was but a shadow of the heavenly. God now rests in Christ, rests in the Church, will rest in the Church brought home to glory. For then will His work of love and mercy be completed. Now, it is not wonderful that the work of redemption should give the highest joy to God. For it shows all His character that is shown elsewhere—wisdom, power, justice, goodness, truth; and it shows something more. It shows His pity, and His mercy towards the unworthy and the lost. You remember how this idea of God's chief joy in saving is set forth to us in the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. The shepherd, coming back with the strayed sheep on his shoulder, is gladder over the restored one than over the safe ninety-nine. The woman, finding the lost silver-piece, must have her neighbours to rejoice with her over the recovery. The father, receiving back his poor lost son, makes a feast for joy of soul. When old Jacob met his son Joseph, after he had long mourned him as dead, do

not you think he would be gladder over him than when he was first born to him, the child of his beloved Rachel? When the Shunanmite mother got her dead boy back again to her embrace, alive and well, how must her heart have leapt for fullest joy! I recollect reading a story somewhere how a little babe, laid on a flowery bank by a boy-brother, to whose care it had been given, was seen by an eagle that swiftly stooped from her high flight, and carried it away to her eyry in the rocks. The shrieks and anguish of the poor mother when she heard of the theft of her darling roused the country-side, and strong men ran in haste to climb the mountain-side and search the cliff, if haply the infant might be saved from being devoured. The little boy, whose intermitted watch had given the bird of prey her opportunity, was lowered from the top of the rock to where the nest of the eagles was made, and found his lost sister yet safe among the eaglets. The child was brought back with shouts of joy, and as the mother once more clasped her infant safe, she drew from a deeper well of gladness than she ever knew before. Our Heavenly Father, in like manner, rejoices over the saved. Nor will He rest till the salvation of His Church is complete, and His children are all and altogether blessed.—JOHN EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 661.



# HAGGAI

## THE GLORY OF THE LATTER HOUSE

'The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.'—HAGGAI II. 9.

For what reasons and in what respects was the second temple to have greater glory than the first? I answer, on three accounts.

I. Because Christ was to come to it.

II. Because Christ was to make atonement for sin there.

III. Because it was to give place to a new and better temple than either Solomon's or itself.

I. **Christ, the Promised Messiah, was to Come to it.**—There is a beautiful title given to Christ in the seventh verse. He is spoken of as the Desire of all nations. How is that? you say. You know well enough that the Jews, taught by their prophets from the beginning, were looking for Him when He came. But how did the blind heathen desire Him? Different things must be stated to give an answer to this question. There was in the hearts even of the dark nations a blind seeking after Him. I have heard it said that insane persons, or persons in delirium from fever, will sometimes go away back to childhood and bring up things altogether forgotten in sane hours. I have heard of one who, at a time when the brain had reeled in disease, was overheard speaking a language of which she was quite ignorant when well. It was the language of her early childhood, altogether forgotten, till the fever heat quickened the memory and brought it back again. So I sometimes think the hearts of the heathen must have occasionally called up, as in a dream, some dim feeling of the old happy state from which sin cast the race down. Besides, and this is plainer, conscience and heart cried out for peace, such peace as Jesus came to give and alone can bestow. Then yet further, by the scattering of the Jews, and the circulation of the Scriptures, an expectation of some great Deliverer to appear in the East was widely spread when Christ was about to come. Now it is evident, from the verse where the Desire of all nations is spoken of, that His coming was to make the temple glorious; for immediately after His coming is foretold, it is added, 'And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts'.

II. **Christ Came to make Atonement for Sin, in the Second Temple, and so to Make it Glorious.**—In the close of the verse it is said, 'And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts'. Now peace is made by the blood of the cross of Jesus; and the shedding of that blood to secure peace on earth was the most glorious event of time. It is true, Jesus' blood was not literally shed in the temple, it

did not, like the blood of the animal sacrifices, flow in the sacred courts; but He who visited the temple came to die for men, and so to fulfil all the typical sacrifices that had been offered there for ages. The brazen altar of burnt-offering stood in the court around the holy oracle, to show that entrance into the presence of God could only be had by offering of life—there must be suffering for men on earth, in order to their finding access into heaven; and it was partly a sign of the same truth that was given when Jesus died on the tree outside the gate of Jerusalem. The old economy had a daily succession and profusion of oblations in the form of animal death; many victims fed its altar-fires, and there was something grand, though awful, in the multitude of its sacrifices. But the very multitude and continuance of them showed that they could not take away sin. Oh, how much grander was the sight of that one sacrifice, to which all others looked forward, and which fulfilled them all, and made them no more necessary or fitting! Surely that temple had a superior glory, which, could it have spoken, might have said, as Jesus walked its courts, See Him to Whom all my services have pointed, in Whom alone they had significance and worth; see Him come at length—Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world'.

How different, we may here reflect, is the world's estimate of glory from the Bible's! The world has allowed war and conquest to take the word 'glory' to be very much their own. So we speak of a glorious victory, a glorious campaign, a glorious death. But the Bible joins glory and peace. In natural things we do the same. We do not call the hurricane, the earthquake, the conflagration, glorious; but sunshine, summer calm, summer noon, the summer landscape, rich and in peace, take the epithet appropriately. Around Christ Jesus and His work on earth you see the glory of peace richly shining. His grand mission was peace. His life was peace. He taught peace. He bought peace. The angels sang peace when He was born. He left a legacy of peace when He went to the cross to die. When He rose up in the ship and said, 'Peace, be still,' to raging winds and waves, He gave a picture of what He came to do. He gave another when He rode on an ass's colt into Jerusalem. And when we look calmly at it, we see that in making peace is true glory. It is a grand thing to do so anywhere. It is a sweet work to hush the quarrels of children. It is a fine thing to stop the sound of strife in neighbourhoods. It is a noble thing to heal divisions in a church, to induce contending nations to lay down their arms, to bring alienated friends together again. But oh, how glorious

to restore peace between God and man! This the second temple saw Jesus do, by the offering of Himself without spot to God.

**III. The Second Temple had a Glory beyond the First, because it was to give Place to a New and Better Temple.**—That is a strange saying of the wise man, 'The day of one's death is better than the day of his birth'. How can that be? Is it better to die than to live? No; but the end of the present life is better than its commencement, because it is the beginning of a new and higher life. It closes life, but if it open immortality, what then? John the Baptist was the greatest of all the prophets before Christ, for this reason, as for others, that he was the last of them. You know, I dare say, the star of evening and of morning. It is the same star in different positions. It shines with much the same brightness in both, and is always beautiful. But why is there a special delightfulness about it when it adorns the eastern sky? Because it leads in the dawn. Because it is soon to

Melt away into the light of heaven.

So the second temple was to be the last of its kind. It shone when the night of the old age was far spent, and the day at hand. A new temple was to rise in the new age. That temple had its foundation laid when Christ died and rose again. It began to be built on the day of Pentecost. It is still a-building. We are in it. If we are Christ's we are stones in it, built up in faith and love. Or take another view suggested by what happened in the building of the temple of Solomon. Far off in the quarry and ground apportioned for the work of hewing, we are being shaped and fashioned and polished, to be

laid noiselessly in our place in the great temple of salvation as it shall appear completed and filled with God on Mount Zion above.

There are four remarks I wish you to notice in closing:—

1. This text proves that the Jews are wrong in believing that Christ has not yet come. For in the temple of Zerubbabel, God was to give peace. The Desire of all nations was to appear there. But the second temple has long been destroyed. Not one stone of it has been left above another. If, then, the Messiah has not come, this prophecy has not been made good.

2. This text shows that outward splendour is not true glory. It is not in a person. There may be beauty of face and nobility of form; there may be rich and splendid dress; but if the soul be foul with sin, or meanly robed, there is no real glory. It is not otherwise in a church. A fine edifice, a crowd of hearers, riches, numbers, gifts of mind, will not make a church shine in the eye of God, if faith, and love, and life in Christ be wanting. What makes day glorious? Not the clouds; not the hills; not the woods, rivers, seas, but the sun that clothes them all with his light. So is it with the church: everything is dark if Christ the Sun be not there.

3. This text suggests such questions as these—Have you desired Christ? Have you sought Him? Has He come to you? Has He made your hearts temples, glorious with His presence?

4. This text shows what will be the great glory of heaven. 'The Lord God giveth it light, and the Lamb is the glory thereof.'—JOHN EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 566.

# ZECHARIAH

## THE CHILDREN'S FUTURE

'And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.'—ZECHARIAH VIII. 5.

THE prophet Zechariah is painting a beautiful word picture; he is painting the Jerusalem which is to be. At the time he was speaking the hearts of all holy men and women were pained because of the state the city was in. A great many people had come back from exile, but they had come back to a city in ruins and to a temple in ruins; and, sad to say, there were enemies who hindered them in rebuilding, and there were also sins in the lives of some of the people which added to the sadness and disorder.

But yet there were good men and holy women amongst them, and these the prophet wishes to encourage. Yes, not only does he wish to encourage them, but he has received from God a special message, a special prophecy for them. Jerusalem or Zion is yet to be great, and so at God's prompting he draws a beautiful picture of the future city. Let us read just a few words of the prophecy. He says—

'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts a holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.'

What a picture to feast the heart upon! Old men and old women shall be seen dwelling in Jerusalem, every man so advanced in his age that he needs his staff to support him. Not as it had been—the streets deserted, the people carried into captivity, the young men going off to the wars and perishing there, pestilence and famine cutting off men and women in the prime of life. No; but men and women living on to a happy old age in peace and quiet; coming to their grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.

But we have not got all the beauty of the picture yet. There is something still more attractive, something more tender, something which appeals more powerfully to us; there is something of dancing, laughing joy yet remaining. We have it in the words of our text: 'And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof'. What brightness these words give the picture! We see children's faces wreathed in smiles, we hear their joyous shouts, we watch them flitting to and fro, we mark the smiles of the aged men and women leaning on their staves as they see them at their play.

Oh, the picture would not be nearly so complete nor so beautiful if it were not for those boys and those girls playing in the streets. Such, then, was God's picture, God's promise, God's future for their beloved city Jerusalem.

'And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.'

There is an inference that we may draw from these words which concerns the young people; it is this: 'God's future is a good time for the boys and the girls. When God looks forward to the future city, He does not think of the men and the women only—He thinks also of the boys and the girls. They have a place in His thoughts and a part in the life of the city; there is to be happiness for them.

When you remember the marvellous way in which God led some of the young people of the Bible—led them to usefulness and happiness; when you remember how He preserved them amidst their dangers and false charges, and brought them out at last to stand in the full light, so that all men might see their truthfulness and their righteousness, surely you must feel that these things are all proofs of His readiness to serve even the youngest among us.—JOHN EAMES, *Sermons to Boys and Girls*, p. 91.

## A SERMON ON PLAY

ZECHARIAH VIII. 5.

**I. Children Playing.**—I was staying the other night at the house of a friend, and the lesson at evening prayer happened to be the chapter in Zechariah in which the words occur, 'The city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets'.

It was the old city of Jerusalem that was meant. Only a few years before no children could be seen in the streets. The city itself was in ruins. Its walls were thrown down, its houses burnt, its streets deserted. Its people were slaves in Babylon. But that evil time was coming to an end. Builders were building up the broken walls, and Zechariah had been sent by God to cheer them at their work and to tell them of good times coming. There shall be happy homes once more in the old city, and the streets of it shall be full of boys and girls at their play.

But best of all, this New Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven is not some city in a far land which we cannot enter till we die. It is the city the dear Saviour brought down out of heaven when Himself came; the city He tells us of in the Sermon on the Mount which is to give light unto the world, and which He speaks of in the parables as the kingdom of heaven. It is on the earth now, it is



in every home where Christ is loved; it is in every Church and nation where God's will is done.

And what is better still, what the prophet said of the Old Jerusalem is true also of the Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven. In the New Jerusalem as in the old, the streets shall be full of boys and girls at their play. And boys shall grow up to manhood and girls to womanhood in the service of its King, and in the joy of a dwelling-place which shall also be the dwelling-place of God.

In every city where Christ is King there shall be boys and girls at play.

I cannot tell you how beautiful this seems to me, that this should be part of the glad tidings of God. It shows that the sight of boys and girls at play is a pleasure to God Himself. I really think it is a pleasure to everybody who loves God. Dr. Martin Luther was a great lover of God. He once sent a letter to his little son John about children in heaven. And he described them even there as at play. 'I know a lovely and smiling garden,' he said, 'full of children dressed in robes of gold, who play under the trees with beautiful apples, pears, cherries, nuts, and prunes. They sing, they leap, they are all joyful. There are also beautiful ponies with bridles of gold and saddles of silver. In passing through the garden I asked a man what it meant, and who were the children. He replied: "These are the children who love to pray and to learn, who are pious and good children."'

That is a garden not a city; but it is the garden where Christ is King. And it is like the city in this, that it had boys and girls in it at play. Pious and good the boys and girls were, lovers of prayer and learning; but after that, happy with play. I have not seen this garden as Luther did. But I believe in it. It will be in that garden as Zechariah said it was about to be in Jerusalem. Whether in the garden, or on the streets of God's city, the children will be at play. And even now in this world, in the city where we live, I never see children at play but I think it is a little foretaste of the new Jerusalem dropped down into their lives.

Play is neither idleness nor folly. It is one of the many good things which have come into your life from heaven. It is a gift from God. It is one of His wonderful works. When he made the beautiful earth and the sky, and the body and soul of man, He made the happy play of childhood. It is part of your life as truly as prayer is, as truly as the soul itself is. And it is part of the life of children all the world over.

I have sometimes thought that I have seen little glimpses of the pleasure that God takes in your play. I have seen a mother sitting at her door on a summer afternoon, laying her sewing down that she might enjoy the sight of her children at play, and I have said to myself: 'Something like the joy of that mother is the joy of God'. I know a poet who made a song on the happiness of poor children at their first day of play in spring. All the winter they were shut up in their homes for want of shoes. But now, the

winter was past and the sun shining and the air warm. And 'the bairnies', barefooted, but happy, 'were out on the pavement again'. The poet watches them as they skip and dance and play. He enjoys their joy. It is real gladness to him that

There were shoeless feet have forgotten their pain  
As they walk in the sun on the pavement again.

And oftener than once, when reading that song, I have said: 'Something like this must be the joy of God as He looks down on the same sight'.

**II. Purpose of Play.**—I want you next to understand why God has made play a part of your life. For one thing, He wants you to be strong. He has work waiting in the years to come for every boy and girl on the earth. And although it is not all the same kind of work, all of it is work which will want strength for the doing. Therefore He will not have you always at tasks. He has divided the time for tasks with times for play. And he has made it a joy to you to be at play. He will have you out in the open air. He will have you drink in the breath of the sea and of the moorland when you can. He will have head and throat and arms and limbs and inside and outside of you bathed and fanned by every passing breeze. And by your games He will have your body in endless motion. You shall run and not be weary. You shall leap and dance and race and climb, so that every part of you may be made strong for the work that lies before you in life.

For another thing, God wants you to have a happy gateway into life. Nobody can tell beforehand whether your after life shall be happy. But God in His love has secured that the time of play shall be happy. I look back to that time in my own life. I would not, for a whole world, have it taken out of my life. It is the same with almost every one. The time of childhood which you are in now, when your companions and you romp and run and fill up your days with games, will become a memory to you when you are old, which shall be worth more to you than thousands of gold and silver. I have heard old people telling the story of their happy childhood. The world was all fair to them then. Their hearts leaped up when they saw a rainbow in the sky. The stars, the hills, the sands and waves of the sea, the running streams, the woods, the open parks in cities, the very streets themselves were a wonder and a delight to them. Those were the days when every day seemed like Joshua's for length, and when a year looked like a stretch of the eternal years. So wonderful, so fresh, so full of delight were those days and the happy play enjoyed in them, that one looking back upon them once could only tell out the delight of them by saying, 'Trailing clouds of glory do we come, from God who is our home'.

There is one more reason I should like to mention why God has made play a part of your life. He wants to train you to be fair and just, cheerful and unselfish. In games you are joined together, just as we who are old are in our toils. The playground is

a little world. And you cannot have pleasure in any of its games unless you try to have the others playing with you as happy as yourself. You have to learn to forget self. You have to try to consider the wishes of others. To be unkind, or unjust, or unfair, or ungenerous in a game is to spoil it, or bring it to an end. Even to be ill-tempered and sulky is to spoil a game. Perhaps you never thought that the Lord Jesus has left us a word about children sulking in their play. But He has. He liked to see children at play. And it was a pain to Him when they sulked and spoiled the game. There was a play in His time that He often looked at in the market-places, and perhaps in His boyhood took part in. It required two companies: the one, of children pretending to be a marriage company; the other, of children who had fifes and harps and were a band of music. When the play went well, the marriage company stopped before the young musicians and danced to their music. Sometimes the game took a sad turn, and instead of a marriage it was a funeral. But all the same it was play. Now the Lord had seen the play spoiled because some of the children sulked. He had seen the vexation on the faces of the children who were willing to play, and had heard them complaining that they had played the wedding music and their companions had not danced, and the funeral music and they had not mourned.

But now I will bring my sermon on play to an end. I shall be glad if what I have said helps you to see God's love more clearly than before. The more we know of God, the more we see that He deserves our love. And surely this is a new rich addition to our knowledge of Him, when we discover that the same kind Father who gave His Son to die for us, that He might deliver us from sin and death, made the joy and play of boys and girls on the streets.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 291.

### CHRIST WOUNDED BY HIS FRIENDS

(For Good Friday)

'And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends.'—ZECHARIAH XIII. 6.

I THOUGHT you would like to-day to think only about Jesus Christ, and about the 'wounds' of Jesus Christ. You know why we should think about that to-day particularly.

Now what were the 'wounds' of Jesus Christ? Let us think about that first. I wonder how many there were. You know that cruel people crucified Him. Sometimes, when people were crucified, they had no 'wounds'. They were only tied with cords to the cross. That was one way of crucifying.

But when Jesus was crucified He was nailed to the cross. They ran the nails through His hands, and fastened each hand to the cross; and they ran the nails through His feet, and they nailed His feet to the cross. That made four 'wounds'.

And then you remember, that when the Roman soldiers came to break the legs of the three that were

crucified, they found that Christ was dead already—so they did not break His legs; but one of them ran a spear into His side, near His heart, and there came out 'blood and water'. So that made five 'wounds'.

Four soldiers crucified Him—it was called a quaternion, and each, probably, took a hammer and a nail and drove it into His hands and feet, making four 'wounds'; and one came after, and ran his spear into his side, making the fifth 'wound'.

But there were more than five 'wounds'. He received the Roman scourging. The manner in which the Romans used to scourge was dreadful! I have no doubt His back bled very much.

And, besides that, He had a crown of thorns upon His head, and that probably pierced His temples. So He had 'wounds' in His head.

Was that all? Oh, no! I do not think that was the worst part. I think He had worse 'wounds' than these; 'wounds' in His feelings, 'wounds' in His heart. You remember that Solomon says (Prov. xviii. 14), 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?'

Now how much our dear Saviour had to 'wound' His heart! Think of all the unkind and cruel things that were said to Him. But I do not think that they hurt Him. I think he was grieved more on account of the sins of the poor people that said them. He said, 'Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves'. It was the thought of their sins that made Him so sad.

Who gave Him all those 'wounds'? Can you think? The four Roman soldiers? They drove in the nails, but they would not have done so if they had not been told. Who told them? Pontius Pilate. Thus Pontius Pilate made those 'wounds'. But Pontius Pilate would not have done it if the Jews had not wished it. Poor wretched man! he tried to please everybody. He did not wish to crucify Christ, but he was a weak-minded man; and weak-minded people are always cruel. He did it because the Jews wished it. Therefore the Jews sent Pontius Pilate to do it; and Pontius Pilate sent the soldiers; and the soldiers did it.

But who sent the 'wounds' into His heart? Almost everybody who was there. Poor Peter did. When he denied Him three times, he must have made three great 'wounds'. And I am sure Judas, when he betrayed Him, made a great 'wound'. And all the disciples when they ran away, must all have made great 'wounds'.

Were they 'friends'? All of them. Do not you remember that all the Jews were particularly His 'friends'? How kind He had been to all the Jews! He had placed them in a beautiful country, and taken great care of them. But see how his 'friends' received Him. Read John i. 11, 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not!' He calls them 'His own'. All these dear Jews He loved as 'His own'. And yet they 'wounded' Him.

I am sure Peter was His 'friend'. He took him

with Him even when He would not take anybody else. He was His great 'friend'.

Was Judas His 'friend'? Yes, he was twice called His 'friend'. Look at Psalm xli. 9—it is about Judas—'Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread'—you know again and again He fed him; at the miracles of the loaves and at other times, he 'hath lifted up his heel against Me'. And now look at Matthew xxvi. 50—Jesus said to him, when he came to take Him in the garden, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?'

So they were all 'friends' to Him. Is not that like the text?—'These wounds were those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends'.

But who gave those 'wounds' to Jesus? Really, not the soldiers—not Pilate—not the Jews—not Peter—not Judas—not all the disciples. What did then? Cannot you think?

God would not have let the Jews hurt Jesus merely to please them. No: there was something behind the hammer; something behind the four soldiers. What was it? 'Sin.' Sin brought the hammer; sin brought the nails; sin moved the hands that drove the nails. Sin did it.

What sin? Everybody's sin. Not merely the soldiers, but the sin of everybody in the world. Who then crucified Christ? Everybody in the world.

There was a little girl who knew very well what it was to be a 'friend of Jesus,' of whom I have read in the life of Dr. Morrison, missionary to China. She was a very little girl; and she slept in a little bed by herself in a large room, where there was also a great bed, in which nobody slept.

One night after she had gone to bed and was sleeping, there came to the house where she lived this great missionary, Dr. Morrison; and he said he had come to sleep there. As there was no other empty bed in the house, they put him in the great bed, beside the little bed where the little girl slept. She did not know he was there.

When she awoke very early in the morning, she saw him, and was much frightened at first, and then she said to him, 'Man, are you a friend of Christ?' And he replied, 'Yes, my dear, I hope I am.' And then she was not at all afraid. She knew what it was to be 'a friend of Jesus' herself, and it made her happy to be with one of His 'friends'.

You are the 'friends' of Jesus; but if you do what is wrong you 'wound' Jesus; and it is such a base, ungrateful, shocking thing, when a 'friend' gives us a 'wound!' Would you not think so if a 'friend,' one to whom you had always been very kind and good, were to give you a 'wound'—would you not call it a base, mean, dastardly thing?

Now, a great many in this church will know what I am going to tell you. There was a very great man once, called Julius Cæsar; he was excessively kind to his 'friends,' and he made a great many. When Julius Cæsar became a great man, Emperor of Rome, his 'friends' were jealous of him, and I will tell you

what they did one day, when Cæsar went to the senate house as usual.

Some followed him there; and, as soon as Cæsar had sat down, one man, called Cimber, took hold of the bottom of his robe, pretending to love him; and began to supplicate him, holding him down on his seat; and, while doing so, there came up another man called Casca, and with his dagger, he gave him a wound in the neck. Cæsar sprang up against Casca; and immediately another man, called Cassius, came and plunged his dagger into Cæsar's breast. Being a strong and brave man, Cæsar flew at Cassius also; and, by fighting, probably he would have relieved himself from these, had not a third man, called Brutus, attacked him. Cæsar had been more kind to Brutus than any of his 'friends,' and when he saw him, he said, 'And thou too, O Brutus?' and immediately fell—he could fight no longer; he drew his mantle round him, and died, covered with wounds, twenty-three in number, all given him by his 'friends!' Thus Cæsar died in the senate house. Oh! how base were Cæsar's 'friends!'

But might not Jesus, from His throne in glory, look down upon this church, and say to you, 'And thou, my friend, whom I have treated as a child, dost thou wound me?'

I have seen a very little baby 'wound' Christ. A little baby in arms perhaps lifts up its little naughty arm in a passion, and strikes its nurse or mother. Now that little child does not know Jesus; but still I believe Jesus in heaven is grieved (if I may so speak) to see the naughty heart there is in that little baby so lately born. When it gets angry and strikes, even though it be a little baby, its sin 'wounds' Jesus.

But still more when it gets a little older. Suppose a boy or girl tells a lie. Now we never tell a lie without doing injury to some one, and besides, it breaks a commandment. Therefore a lie not only injures somebody in this world, but it runs a dagger into the Lord Jesus Christ. You 'crucify Him afresh'. You make a 'wound,' as far as you can, in His heart.

Or, I will suppose such a thing as any boy being disobedient to his own father or mother, or disrespectful to them, or saying something wrong to them. It goes like a poniard into the heart of the father and mother—they are deeply grieved; but that is not the worst part of it. It has gone through the parent's heart into the heart of Jesus—it is a 'wound' in the side of Jesus!

Now, suppose there are any cruel boys or girls who say something very spiteful, or tyrannical, or do something cruel; perhaps strike some little boy or girl. They hurt others; they hurt themselves; and they 'wound' Jesus. The blow you give, the cruel word you speak to another little boy or girl, goes through the heart, remember that; and it actually 'wounds' the Lord Jesus. These are 'the wounds that He receives in the house of His friends'.

But now I am going to tell you something very



true—you make the 'wounds,' yet those 'wounds' heal. You are saved by what you make.

Now I want you to look a minute, with the eye of faith, within them. Look on the 'wounds' of Jesus—the five 'wounds'; and the 'wounds' on His forehead, and the 'wounds' on His dear back, and the 'wounds' in His precious heart—think of them! Now what are they to you? I am going to tell you three things they are to you.

The first is, they are to you a fountain—something comes from them. Will you look at John xix. 34. What came out of His side? 'Water and blood.' What for? To wash your sins away. You have 'wounded' Jesus—that is what God is so angry with you for, till you are forgiven. What displeases God more than anything else is, that you have 'wounded' Jesus, His dear Son; and the 'water and blood' came out of His 'wounds' to wash your soul from sin.

If you look at Zechariah xiii. 1, you will find it says, 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness'.

There was a little boy who one day had grieved his father by being disobedient; and his father was obliged to keep him at a distance. In the evening, he came to his father, and said, 'I am very sorry, papa; I hope you will forgive me'. He said, 'I will forgive you at once'. The little boy said, 'Now I am so happy; I can do my Latin and Greek with anybody now'. His father said, 'Stop! there is some one else grieved besides me. Christ has been grieved. You must go and ask Christ to forgive you.' 'Oh! father,' said he, 'do you think I could be so happy if I had not asked Him to forgive me? I went first to my own room, and asked Him to do

so, and I think He has washed out my sin'. So he found the 'wounds' caused him a cure.

Further, they are a letter-bag. That is not my thought; but the thought of perhaps one of the most beautiful poets that ever lived—George Herbert. I should like you all to read and love his poems. One is called 'The Letter-Bag'. If you have not George Herbert's poems, I should be glad to lend them to you, or read them to you any Thursday morning.

I cannot repeat this poem now; but the idea is that of a traveller having come all the way from heaven to our world; and he describes how He was dressed, and all about it; and then he tells how the 'wound' was made in His side with a spear; and then he supposes this traveller (who is the Lord Jesus Christ) to say, 'I am going back to my own country, to heaven; and if you have anything to send there, I will take it—for I have a place here in my side, a 'wound'; and I will carry it safely to heaven, it shall lose nothing; but I will make it pleasant by adding a little to it, to the person to whom I am taking it'. So he calls it 'a letter-bag' where Christians are to put all their prayers and petitions, that are to go to heaven. Do you think they would ever reach heaven if it were not for those 'wounds'? So they are like a letter-bag, in which to put everything, and send it up to God for remembrance.

I will tell you of one thing more. These 'wounds' are a 'hiding-place'. I do not, of course, literally mean a hiding-place, but they are like one. Because Jesus was 'wounded,' we may go and be safe—safe in the love of that dear Saviour who was 'wounded' for us: there we may safely hide ourselves from all dangers and evils in this life, and from all peril in the day of judgment.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

# MALACHI

## JEWELS

'My jewels'.—MALACHI III. 17.

God's jewels are men and women, boys and girls. He has many others. The stars you see at night up in the sky, flashing with the light of ten thousand diamonds, are jewels upon His garments. But they are not His most precious jewels—the gems of His crown'.

There are three things about God's jewels which I wish to speak of:—

**I. The Finding of the Jewel.**—Look at the ring on your mother's finger. It is a beautiful hoop of fine gold; and see, there are five diamonds clasped in its delicate work. Where did the ring come from—that gold and these diamonds? I will tell you.

The diamonds came all the way from India or Brazil. They were found among earth and rocks. Men went down and wrought in the mines for them. They broke the rocks with hammers and picks, till they found a thin vein of earth, which they dragged out with long iron hooks and carried carefully away. They put it in long troughs, slightly inclined, and made a stream of water run over it, which gradually carried away all the mud, leaving only the stones and bits of rock. These they took up one by one, looking carefully to see if any of them were diamonds. Yes, look! there is a streak of light shot out from the heart of that one; it is a diamond. After lying for ages among the worthless earth and rocks, it is found and rescued by man's patient toil.

But where did the gold come from? From an African river. The river, swollen with tropical rains at its sources, came down, bearing with it all sorts of debris from the far-off mountains, and soil from the countries through which its floods had poured. The negroes had to flee away from its banks for their lives. But when the flood was over, they returned. They dug down through the mud left by the river, and carried the sand away. They washed it till nothing but the gravel was left, in which they then carefully looked for the shining grains of gold.

This is the way jewels are found. And God finds His in the same way. Just as the diamond and the gold are hidden among rocks and earth, mud and sand, and are only found by great labour and trouble, so God's jewels are lost and hidden among vile sins and earthly habits, and shut up in hard stony hearts; and it is with great trouble He discovers them. He sent His Son down out of heaven to seek His lost jewels; and He had to come and work in the muddy river-beds, and in the dark earth and rocky mines to find them.

In every man and woman there is one of God's jewels, however much it may be hidden, however firmly it may be enclosed in the rocks of sin. When you see a drunk man or woman going along the streets, when you see a beggar with ragged and dirty clothes, with a dissipated and sodden face, with a whole lifetime of sin displaying its marks on every feature, remember that even that is one of God's jewels. When you hear of heathens far away who are vile savages, the slaves of every sin, remember these are yet God's jewels.

**II. The Fashioning of the Jewel.**—Look at the ring again. I have told you where it comes from. But nobody could wear the gold as it comes out of the mine. It has to go through many processes first. The diamond goes to the lapidary. He takes it, and with a great number of delicate but very strong instruments cuts it into the right shape. It is extremely hard, so hard that nothing can cut it but another diamond. And he has diamond-sand, which he must use with all his instruments to make them pierce it. Its surface is cut into a number of little squares or triangles—facets they are called—which make a splendid play of colours, although the diamond itself is as pure and transparent as water.

The gold goes to the goldsmith. He has first to separate it from the earth and other things, such as silver and copper, which he finds mixed with it. He does this by washing it with water, by applying different kinds of acids and other chemical substances to it, and by burning it in the fire. Then he has to mix it with other metals to make it hard enough to be wrought. When all is ready, he puts it into the fire and makes it soft enough either to be poured into a mould, which he has ready for it, or to be bent by his hammer on a little anvil. He taps it with the hammer, and grasps it in the vice, and bites it with the file, and rubs and polishes it, till at last it is ready to receive the diamonds, which he then carefully fits into their places. And so at last it is a jewel, fashioned by the cunning skill and the patient work of the master.

Now God has to fashion His jewels too. Jesus finds them and snatches them out of their sins; but they are not yet fit to be worn by God. He has to give them over to a most skilful Artificer, who purifies and polishes them, and forms them into jewels fit for God to wear. This is the Holy Ghost. I cannot at present explain all the ways in which He does this work, or all the instruments He uses. I dare say you have been surprised in a jeweller's shop to notice the number of little hammers and files and drills, and you have wondered what they were all for. But the

Holy Spirit uses a far greater variety of means to fashion God's jewels. Let me mention only two of them.

1. *Water*.—I have shown you how water is used to cleanse the diamond and the gold. What is the water which the Holy Ghost uses? If you turn up and read Ephesians v. 25-27, you will see. It is the Word. When people who are God's jewels read His Word, and when they hear it preached, it purifies and polishes them. For it shows them the hateful-ness of their sin, so that they put it away; and it shows them some grace or virtue which they do not yet possess, and they begin to long and pray till they get it, and it shines as a new beauty in their character.

2. *Fire*.—The goldsmith uses fire, as I have told you, to melt the gold, either when he wants it to run into a particular mould or when he wants to bend it into a particular shape. Now what is the fire the Holy Spirit uses? It is affliction. I have to call on a great many people who are afflicted, and they often tell me that they never would have been Christians if God had not afflicted them. Their hearts before were as hard as a piece of iron. But affliction melted them, and then they flowed into God's mould.

III. *The Wearing of the Jewel*.—But at last the work is complete. The jewel is all ready now. Once it was away down in the black, filthy mine. Now its shape is lovely, its beauty is perfect. It is a ring to adorn a beautiful finger, or an ear-ring to hang on a lovely ear, or a bracelet to flash on a shining arm, or a crown to grace the brow of a king.

So, after all the work of Christ in finding them, and all the work of the Holy Spirit in fashioning them, the jewels of God are fit at last to be worn. Kings and great people who have many jewels keep most of them locked past; but on great occasions, such as a coronation day, they bring them all out. So there is a day coming when God is to gather together all His jewels and wear them before all eyes. It is the last day. Then God will bring forth His jewels; He will gather them from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and wear them all. Then all His saints, from every age, and from every clime, all who have ever loved him, will be gathered round him. How they will shine! How He will be made glorious in them!

People wear jewels for two reasons: first, for the beauty of them; and secondly, to show their own wealth. So on that day God will rejoice in the beauty of His jewels. They will be beautiful without and within. If you be there, you will be beautiful in your clothing, beautiful in your faces, and beautiful in your souls. Sometimes in this world people are beautiful to look on outside; but if you could look within them, they are as ugly as can be; their souls are little and deformed, and defiled with pride and envy and falsehood. On the other hand, there are persons who have beautiful souls—pure and gentle, simple and affectionate; but their faces are plain or their bodies are deformed. But God's jewels will then be

equally beautiful within and without. Yet they will all be different, and there will be millions of them together! They will be like a glorious galaxy of stars.

But God will rejoice in them chiefly as a display of His wealth. He has all sorts of wealth. But the wealth He is proudest of is the wealth of love. And just as a king's jewels show his wealth in money, so will the redeemed show God's wealth in love. No other jewels which He has can display His love as that gathering will.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 131.

## JEWELS

'My jewels.'—MALACHI III. 17.

I. *Jewels are Precious*.—Of all earthly things they are the most costly. Many of the most famous gems are worth a king's ransom. The Koh-i-noor, or 'Mountain of Light,' which glitters in our Queen's diadem, is valued at £250,000; the 'Regent' diamond was sold to Louis XV. of France for £130,000, and is now said to be worth twice that sum; while the history of the Orloff diamond, the most brilliant gem in the Russian crown, is quite a romance in itself. It was once the eye of an idol in India, but a Frenchman who saw it made a glass eye to resemble it, and put it in the place of the diamond, with which he ran away. Finding his treasure a burden, he sold it to a ship's captain for £2000; the captain brought it to Europe, and sold it for £20,000; and after many changes it came at last into the hands of a diamond merchant, who sold it to the Empress Catherine, through Count Orloff, for £90,000 in money, a yearly pension of £4000, and a peerage of the Empire. These of course are world-famed jewels, and there are few to be compared with them. But there is no need to take such startling illustrations of the value of precious stones. Even gems of small size are of great worth, and far above gold for preciousness. You all know the value of a sovereign; a diamond of the same size would be worth thousands of the gold pieces. So, when God calls us His jewels, we see that He must prize us very much. He esteems us worth His care; He holds us very dear; He cherishes us with unspeakable love. And when we do wrong, and stoop to low and mean practices, it grieves Him, as the Queen would be grieved to see the precious gems of her diadem rolling in the gutter.

II. *But there are Many Sham Jewels*.—Whatever is valuable is sure to have counterfeits. Our gold and silver coins are imitated in inferior metals; and there are people who make a living by issuing these bad coins. The shopkeeper generally tries the ring of your sovereign upon the counter before he gives you change, lest he should be cheated. So are jewels imitated. Preparations of rock crystal or very fine glass are tinted with the needed hue, and deceive the keenest sight. Paste diamonds cannot be told from real ones by anything in their appearance. There was a celebrated Genoese vase which for hundreds of



years was thought to be a real emerald. On one occasion it was pledged for £30,000, so great was its supposed value. And, after all, it was discovered to be nothing but coloured glass. It looked like an emerald; but when the file was applied the cheat was discovered. In other cases some sharp acid is used to detect the real nature of the seeming gem. Now, people who make believe to be good are like sham jewels. They are called hypocrites, or actors. They are playing a part and pretending to be what they are not. Very often the motive which prompts them is the desire to be thought well of and honoured by men. They make a fair show in the flesh, though their inner life is unrenewed.

It is easy enough to do right when the right is pleasant and delightful. To do right when you are laughed at or threatened tries of what stuff you are made.

**III. Most Jewels Need Polishing.**—Precious stones are chiefly found in veins of the rocks or in the gravel of rivers. They are generally rough and shapeless in their natural state, and have little beauty that we should desire them. The brilliancy of the diamond is hidden under a hard dull crust. The blushing red of the ruby, the soft clear green of the emerald, and the velvet hue of the sapphire are not displayed to advantage until the lapidary has exercised his skill upon them. There is no comparison between the dull shapeless stone and the sparkling gem in point of beauty and worth. If the stones could speak, I dare say they would complain sorely of ill-usage, as they are being cut, and ground, and polished. But the result pays for all. Now, is not this a parable of the sweet uses of adversity? As Archbishop Leighton said: 'God hath many sharp-cutting instruments and rough files for the polishing of His jewels, and those He especially loves and means to make the most resplendent He hath oftenest His tools upon'. All the pains and sorrows God sends us are intended to make us holier, purer, and more radiant with 'the beauty of holiness'. I don't suppose you feel the need of this lesson yet. Childhood is happily sheltered from the cares and anxieties of later life. But I want you to make provision against the evil day. Take this thought home to your hearts, whatever befalls you comes from God; and when His discipline is most painful, it ministers to our highest good. As Shakespeare says, 'Tis a physic that's bitter to sweet end'. We are His jewels; and He polishes us that we may shine the more. But—

**IV. All Jewels do not Need the Same Treatment.**—The diamond is a very hard stone. In ancient times it was supposed to be too hard for cutting. And though it has been discovered that one diamond may be used to cut another, and that the diamond may be ground and polished in its own dust, the process is still very long and tedious. First of all the stone is firmly cemented to a piece of wood in the required position; then it is held against a rapidly revolving wheel, to which a mixture of diamond dust and olive oil has been applied. When one face of the diamond is finished, the cement is warmed and the stone taken

out and fixed in a different position. This is repeated until the diamond is polished on every side. The work lasts for days; and weeks; sometimes it occupies years. With the emerald it is very different. When taken from the mines it is soft enough to crumble when rubbed or pressed, and so is very easily cut into the required shape. The onyx, again, is exceedingly hard and difficult to polish. There are great water-mills in Germany where this stone is dressed. The wheels are six or seven feet high, and the workman lies at full length upon a bench, with his feet pressed against two supports, so that he may hold the stone more firmly against the whirling wheel. But, on the other hand, pearls require but little grinding or polishing. Many of them are perfect, and only a few of them are rough and badly shaped. So that there is a great difference in the treatment required by various precious gems. This may help us to see why some people have so much more trouble than others. God deals with us each in the way that will bring out his character best. It is not that He favours some at the expense of others. He assigns to each the discipline which will suit his case. And sometimes those who are dealt with most severely may be like the diamond and ruby—among the choicest of his gems when the process of cutting and polishing is ended.

**V. Jewels are Fittingly Set.**—Some of them are fixed in golden rings, others adorn glittering bracelets, others shine in diadems, others are strung in necklaces. But they are not cut and polished for nothing. Each is placed where it can shine, and where its beauty can be seen. So, too, are God's jewels destined for a lofty place in heaven. All the discipline of life is intended to fit us for our sphere above. No harm can befall them that love and serve God. They are His peculiar treasure, and He will set them in his royal diadem, to 'shine as the stars for ever and ever'. 'They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.' Are we among those who are counted as the jewels of the Most High?—G. HOWARD JAMES, *Talks to Young Folk*, p. 141.

#### OUR SUN

'Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.'—MALACHI IV. 2.

**I. The Sun.**—Of all the things the eye can see the most Christ-like is the sun, for *he is quite alone in our world*. Nor rival, nor helper, nor partner has he. Before him all lesser lights pale and pass away. We have many stars, but only one sun, whose 'absence gives them leave to shine'. And all light is in and from the sun. All this beautifully represents the Light of Life, the Light of men. He eclipses all other lights, but can be eclipsed by none. He has extinguished the lamp of the Temple, whose light was merely the shadow of His coming. Yet even this glorious image fails in some ways; for the sun has its dark spots, but in Christ our sun is no darkness at all.

*And the sun is the centre of all the worlds.*—Every star is held in its place by the attractive power

of the sun, and so the world is kept from ruin. And such a central place and controlling power belong to the Sun above the sun. The spirit that breaks away from Him is as a wandering star plunging into the eternal darkness.

*Then the sun is the grand giver in this world.*—Our thoughts wax warm as we sum up all the benefits with which he fills our earth. You cannot overstate them. But for his rays earth were one graveyard. The flowers of the field, as well as your eyes, borrow all their freshness and lustre from him. The fire that warms you, and the gas that gives you light, owe all their genial force to sunbeams shut up in trees ages ago, and now set free for your service. All earth's beauty is but the returning of the sun's smile. Science is every year finding fresh wonders in sunlight. All kinds of force come from the sun. Light must be ever moving and giving: when light stands still it loses its nature. One of the latest discoveries is, that ether in motion is light, and the same ether at rest is darkness. It is thus the sun's nature and life to give with boundless bounty. He gives just as you breathe: for him to be is to shine, and to shine is to give, and to give is to remain as rich as ever. He is also a most gracious giver. He shines on us not because this dull earth attracts or invites him: the sole reason of his shining is in himself. What an unwearied, ungrudging, impartial giver!—fit emblem of Christ Jesus.

The Church above, the moon below,  
A wondrous race they run;  
But all their lustre, all their glow,  
Each borrows from its sun.

Christ is the Sun of righteousness; but why not the Sun of love, or of grace? Note well this strange name. As the sun gives according to a never-changing law, so Christ blesses only in a righteous way. He will not, He cannot heal us save by righteousness. God's equal Son, He is love, for He is our Sun; and He is light, for He is the Sun of righteousness. The grace He brings 'reigns by righteousness'.

**II. The Sunrising.**—To us it is matter not of prophecy but of history. The Sun has arisen; and here again the image fails to set forth all, for He has risen never to set. The first rays are seen in the Gospels, and after the dark eclipse on the cross, the rising was complete when Christ left the grave. Sunrise is probably the grandest sight in the world. In the East it is so magnificent as almost for the moment to make one a Parsee—a worshipper of the rising sun. One Swiss mountain, the Righi, gives a fine view of sunrise, and so myriads from all lands flock to it every year; and a railway has been made to the very top, though it is more than 5000 feet high. Now, what is the great sight that rewards that crowd of early risers? The rising sun makes perfectly plain what was previously hidden. Hill, valley, and lake that were a confused mass, are now all distinctly seen. The light undecives, and reveals a charming scene. At its touch the whole land bursts into beauty. The snowy mountains glow like burnished gold. The

chilled spectator is warmed; he sees, admires, and rejoices. The Sun of righteousness does more than all that in the world of the soul. He has driven away the chilling shadows of night, and poured a full light over the whole realm of Divine truth. He shows us things as they really are. Life and immortality are brought to light. What a panorama lies before us as the shadows retreat! The glorious land afar off stands boldly out to faith's eye, and Beulah's mountain tops appear.

Light is the oldest thing in the world; but on the fourth day of creation God gathered together all the scattered rays that had been quivering in the air, and made the sun, with the moon and stars to reflect its light. And so, some one has said, in the fulness of time, after four thousand years—a day is with the Lord as a thousand years—all the rays that had appeared in the Old Testament were united in Christ Jesus our Sun; and then God made the Church to be fair as the moon, and Christ's people as the stars to give forth His light. Thus Malachi was in the twilight, and you are in the daylight. To him the sun was beneath the horizon, sure harbinger of the wished-for day, shooting many a ray into the darkness, sending forth many a bright streak over the mountains. The first streak came to him from Eden. The Psalms would send forth many bright beams to him, and the fifty-third of Isaiah, and many other passages which you could name. You may wonder how Old Testament saints lived such holy lives when they had only a fraction of your knowledge of Christ. A very recent discovery about sunshine may illustrate this. Sunshine has two kinds of rays: the visible, which have most light; and the invisible, which have most heat. A yellow glass lets in all the light-giving rays, and shuts out nearly all the life-giving ones; but some dark blue glasses let in scarcely any light, and yet let in all the living energy in the sunrays. You may thus have light without life, and much life with little light. Thus a well-understood Gospel may be to some as an Arctic sun, shining everywhere, melting nowhere. And thus Old Testament saints and simple souls among ourselves—believing cottagers and children—may have minds like the dark blue glass. Though they take in little light, they may take in that strange something, that quickening soul in the sunbeam which gives life, and life more abundantly; and may thus excel the learned in every Christian grace.

**III. The Blessings Christ Brings to Men.**—As the sun destroys only darkness and its hateful brood, so Christ destroys only our miseries, and brings us all blessings. And first, *healing*. Have you ever watched the sun rising behind a thick cloud or a hill? Were not its rays then very like the outspread wings of a bird? The pencils of light were like feathers whose unequal lengths readily suggested a wing. They branched out equally on both sides, and showed a wing-like curve. Pictures of the sun often have this wing-like look. The Easterns often carved a winged sun above the gateways of their temples, and

I have seen the same ornament on one public building in our country. Malachi has a poet's quick eye for the glories of nature, and perhaps this also was in his mind—the sun rises like a bird, with equal wings wide enough to cover the world: he is not like a big bird, whose level, heavy flight is winged in the lower regions of the air; but, eagle-like, he soars upwards above the hills, above the mountains, swift, self-poised, unwearyed. The Greeks gave a chariot and horses to the sun, as a symbol of his speed; Malachi gives him wings. So we read elsewhere of 'the wings of the morning,' and 'the wings of the wind'. Or perhaps the shimmering sunrays reminded him of the mother-bird hovering over her young, and all her feathers shivering with fond affection. Which-ever of these explanations we like best, Malachi's meaning is, that as sunlight brings health to a diseased, dying world, so Christ brings health to our diseased, dying souls; and this healing virtue comes to us with

all the ease, swiftness, gentleness, and freshness of morning sunshine.

*This healing brings health which shows itself in joyous activity.*

*To healing and health Christ adds victory.*—For verse third says, 'And ye shall tread down the wicked'. The Mexicans inquired of their priests whether Cortes and his Spaniards were gods or mortal men. 'They are the children of the sun,' was the reply, 'from whom they draw all their strength, but they have no power in the darkness.' And so the Mexicans attacked them at midnight and nearly destroyed them all. That night is still known in the history of Spain as *noce triste*, 'the sad night'. You at least are a child of the sun, whence you gain all your strength. If you walk in darkness you shall fall before the onset of your great foe, the prince of darkness. Walk always in the light, and there shall be no 'sad night' in your spiritual history.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 129.



# ST. MATTHEW

## THE WONDERFUL GUIDE

'Optima revelatio stella.'

'We saw His star.'—MATTHEW II. 2.

THIS motto contains a kind of punning reference to the name of the family that bears it, and also alludes to their crest, which in this case is a star. The family is that of Reveley, which, you see, corresponds in sound to part of the middle word of the three. The text that I have given you points, I suppose, to the source from which the motto itself is derived. It occurs in one of the most beautiful of the many lovely and suggestive stories that cluster round the cradle of Jesus.

There are no more picturesque figures in the imagination of the early Church than those of the three wise men who came from the far East. They were typical of how one day not only all nations, but all the wisdom of this world, was to bow at the feet of Jesus. They came from a long distance, no one knew quite whence, and they had followed a strange and wonderful guide, no revealing voice, but a brilliant steady star. Are there stars for us to follow? We cannot look for them to appear suddenly in the heavens as the wise men saw theirs, but if this motto means anything, it implies that there are such stars, which may be guides to our feet.

I. One noticeable point about the star the wise men followed was, that it led them to Jesus. The stars that may be the guides of our life are what men call 'ideals'. Now, perhaps that word is not quite an easy one for you to understand, but it really means pure, high, and noble aims. Every boy and girl builds what we call 'castles in the air'. They form fancies about their future life—one is going to be an artist, another a poet, another a nurse, another a doctor, another a minister, another a soldier: they discuss all these with the greatest gravity, and regard them as of the highest importance. Sometimes their ideals are very strange. They are like the little boy, perhaps, in Stevenson's poem of the 'Lampighter', who thought that the finest occupation in the world:—

Now Tom would be a lawyer, and Maria go to sea;  
And my papa's a banker, and as rich as he can be,  
But I, when I am stronger, and can choose what I'm to do,  
O Leerie,<sup>1</sup> I'll go round at nights, and light the lamps with you.

But in spite of all their quaintness these children's fancies are of the greatest value, they often mould our life much more deeply than older people think. We cherish them within our hearts, and we do not let them go, though if people make fun of them we may cease to speak about them. They remain our

<sup>1</sup> Leerie-leerie-licht-the-lamps' was the name given by the children in Scotland to the lampighter.

own secrets, and are all the more precious because of their secrecy. Many times they are God's messengers to us, to show what He wants us to be and to do; they point out the way for us whereby God will lead us to render Him the best service we can in the coming years. Men think they explain them when they call them by such long names as 'indications of hereditary talent,' 'artistic temperament,' and so forth, but it is much better for us to think of them as God's stars, and never to lose sight of the true and noble ones, for they will bring us to the place we desire.

A friend of mine was early one morning walking along a path in an Indian forest. Suddenly he became aware, in front of him, of a Brahmin priest walking along the same path. He knew it would not be courteous to pass him. The priest was engaged in chanting verses from his sacred writings. My friend knew the words, and presently joined in the responses. Then the priest began to extemporise, as was the manner of his people, and in this strange kind of chant a conversation was carried on. The missionary began to tell him of a great friend of his own, some one who was so wise and good and helpful and great that He always was able and ready to aid those who loved Him. 'You must show me Him, you must bring me to Him,' cried the Brahmin. 'I cannot show you Him,' was the answer, 'but if you speak to Him with your own heart He will hear you and will show you Himself.' 'I understand,' said the priest; 'that is what my sacred books tell me—henceforth I will meditate only upon Jesus, and my heart will commune with Him.' Can you doubt that along the lines of his own thought the Lord had really come to this faithful seeker? So I say to you, follow those things which are best and purest, so far as you know and understand them. Let your noblest impulses guide you, your most loving thoughts prompt you, and be true always to the best that is within you, and you will find Jesus.

II. Another thing about the journey of these wise men is, that when once they saw the star they followed it faithfully. Had they turned aside at the first difficulty, or when beset by discouragements and dangers, they had never found their way to Bethlehem; so when we set out on this quest of the best and highest that life holds, we must not permit ourselves to turn aside for any lower consideration. We shall, most certainly, be often laughed at, and there will be many ready to dissuade us from the line of conduct we have chosen, but if we are only brave enough to persevere we shall find our endeavour crowned with the highest and truest success.

III. The last thought that I wish to impress upon you is—that these men saw a star only, yet it was enough for them. There are some words in the story that I always delight to read: ‘When they saw the star,’ it says, ‘they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.’ Such gladness filled their hearts because the star they had been following at last stood still over the place where the Child lay. For us there is not only the star and the Child that they saw: but we know the Child grew up to be the boy Jesus at Nazareth, to be the Man of healing and helping in Galilee and in Judea, to be the Man of Sorrows who suffered on the cross, and to be the Man at God’s right hand who, Victor over sin and death, remembers and prays for us.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottos with Great Lessons*, p. 175.

### THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

‘When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.  
 ‘When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.  
 ‘And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.’  
 —MATTHEW II. 9-11.

I. WHAT made these wise men go to Jerusalem? A dream, was it? Or did somebody come and tell them to go? God taught them, and put it into their minds and hearts to go, we know not how. We never go truly—no one ever goes truly to seek Jesus, till God puts it into the heart. All good thoughts and desires after Jesus are from God. They said, ‘We have seen His star.’ They saw a star. You often saw a star, and I suppose often said:—

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
 How I wonder what you are.

But this was a very curious star. God hung up in the sky many other stars, but this star was different from them all—it moved, and the others remained as they were. The wise men, perhaps, heard some one say—‘Mark that star that moves, and follow it till it stands over the Saviour.’ Perhaps their wives and children, with their friends, were surprised at their looking so much at the star, and then at their leaving home and following it. Perhaps they said—‘Why do you look at it so, and follow it? Oh, surely you will not leave us, and go after a star; we may never see you more.’ They may have answered—‘We will follow that star wherever it leads us; God bids us do so, and we will obey Him, whatsoever wives, and children, or neighbours may say or think’. On they went over hill and dale, till they reached Jerusalem, and inquired—‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews?’ ‘When Herod the King heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.’ He was a bad man. To be troubled when persons are seeking for Jesus is the sign of a bad heart. If he had been a good man, he would have said—‘Welcome, welcome to Jerusalem, as ye come to ask about the King of the Jews’. But naughty people do not like to hear about,

nor talk about the Saviour. They will speak at breakfast, and dinner, and tea, almost about anything and anyone, rather than about Jesus and His salvation.

II. How did these wise men find out where Jesus was? How could the people tell them where He should be born? How could they know that He was to come at all? I am sure some of you know how they found it all out. They found it out in the same way that everything else about Jesus is known. Was it by the dictionary? No. Was it by the History of England? No; but by the Bible. Every boy and girl should have a Bible, and ought to be able to say—‘This is my Bible, and this is my name in it; I can find out in it all I want to know about Jesus, and about the way to heaven’. It was by the Word of God that they knew where Jesus should be born. ‘Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, ‘Go and search diligently for the young child, and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also’. ‘That I may come and worship Him also.’ That was a lie; though a king, he was a liar. He did not want to worship Him—he wanted to kill Jesus. He thought within himself, ‘If I find out the time when He was born, then I will know how old He is, and I will kill all the children of that age; thus I will be sure to kill Him too. But God would not allow him to kill Jesus. He was wicked enough to desire to do so; for wicked people wish to do a great many bad things to God’s children, but God does not always allow them. God takes great care of our little children, and why should He not take care of His only-begotten Son?’

I remember reading a story of a baby—a wee child—that travelled by railroad. Away whirled the coach very fast; but it soon knocked against something, and all were thrown out—men, women, mothers and babes. Some were pitched here, some there; heads were broken; hands cut off. In the midst of the confusion a voice was heard crying: ‘Where is my baby? Oh! my dear baby! I cannot find him anywhere. Did nobody see my sweet baby? What shall I do?’ One man lost his leg; another his hand; another his eye; but the mother did not mind them, but was going about wringing her hands, and crying: ‘Where is my baby?’ After much search for it, and for a great while in vain, at length a man went over to a place where was a handbox. He took up the handbox, and what do you think he found under it? The baby fast asleep! Now, if God takes care of common babies, surely He would take care of His own child Jesus.

I remember reading a story about some little boys who went to a river near the sea on which was a boat, and when they were playing there, one said, ‘I will go into the boat’. ‘So will I,’ said Tommy; ‘So will I,’ said Charley; ‘And I,’ said Billy; ‘And I,’ said Patsey. Seven or eight of them went into it.

They jumped about, and played, and laughed heartily. The boat was not fastened, and as the tide ebbed it carried out the boat gently. The little boys went on laughing and playing and telling stories, and out farther still went the boat; and the more the waters were retiring, the farther from the land they carried out the boat. The poor little boys, when they looked at the boat and saw that they were going out to sea, knew not what to do. One was tired, and another was hungry, and all were afraid. At last they all got close together, and laid themselves down at the bottom of the boat, and being tired fell fast asleep. The evening came on, and the boat was still going out to sea. Then night set in and no little boys came home to their mothers. One poor mother came to the shore, looking everywhere and asking every one, 'Where is my Bill?'—and another said, 'Did you see Charley?'—and another, 'Where is my Tom?'—'Oh! did you see my Pat anywhere?' They ran up and down the strand, and round about the town, looking everywhere, asking every one, and crying. The bellman was sent out, and the poor mothers thought that all their children were lost, and they could not eat or sleep without their little ones. A fisherman who was out at sea saw a boat moving very queerly on the water. 'What can that be?' said he, 'no one is steering—no one is rowing it—what is it? I must go and see.' So he pulled away as fast as he could till he came up to it. Then, what do you think he saw? Seven or eight little boys fast asleep, huddled together in the bottom of the boat keeping each other warm, like little birds in a nest. Who took care of them? *God*—the good and great God. They were *foolish* children to go into the boat without leave; but God took care of them and brought them back safe to their friends.

I remember reading a story of a little child who had found Jesus. She was sick, and in bed. One day her mother heard a great noise in her room; she ran in, asking, 'My child, what is the matter?' 'Oh! mother, I am singing, singing about Jesus.' 'Why are you singing so loud, my child?' 'Because I am so happy, mother.' This little girl, though she could not go to seek for money, found a treasure in Jesus, and was glad she had found Him—the pearl of great price. She had found riches that made her heart sing for joy, and when she grew worse and worse, and more and more sick, a loud noise was heard again, and she was heard to say, 'Father, take me; Father, take me'. Her father went in and said, 'What ails you, my child?' 'It was not you I called; it was my Heavenly Father; my Father above; my great and good Father. It was my Father in heaven I was asking to take me.' When people find Jesus, it makes them very happy; it makes them sing loud and long, and praise Him with a tongue sweet as silver; for they regard God as their Father, and heaven as their home.

III. The wise men presented gifts to Jesus, and so should you. I read of a poor blind girl, who brought thirty shillings to a person collecting for

the missionaries. The man said, 'That is too much for you'. 'No, sir,' she said; 'I save that much by being blind. I can work in the night as well as in the day. If I had my sight, I would have to pay for candles to work at night, so I give the thirty shillings to tell poor sinners about Jesus.' I also read of a little boy, who, when the man went round to collect at the meeting, put a bag on the plate—a great bag twice as heavy as my Bible—and, when they examined it, what do you think they found in the bag? Two hundred and eighty-five farthings. His mother used to send him with messages, and when she gave him money to pay her bills, she allowed him to keep the farthings for himself. When he got them altogether he put them in a bag, and gave them for the missionaries.

IV. Is there anything like that star to show you the way to Jesus? I know something like it, very like it. It has a great number of stories in it, and children are fond of stories. We tire of some stories when we hear them often, but we never tire of the story of peace. What is that story? The thing of which I speak will tell you a great deal about the sun, and the moon, and the stars—about the air, and the water, the birds and beasts. It cannot talk or walk, but it can inform you of a lovely place that once was—a place where was no sorrow, no sickness, no sin—a place where the lions were quiet, quite tame—where you might pat a tiger, and rub an eagle down the back. Would you not like to have that thing, that great thing, to tell you all this and much more? What is it? What do you think it is? The Bible. Yes, that is the Star of Bethlehem now. The Bible is like that star, and shows us the way to Jesus. If we follow its directions—if we mind what it says we will find Jesus, and if we find Him we should also worship Him, and present Him our best gifts.—JOHN GREGG, *Sermons to Children* p. 209.

## TEMPTATION

MATTHEW IV.

TEMPTATION is not sin. Christ Himself was tempted, yet was He without sin. Temptation becomes sin when the arms open to receive it. Every sword-stroke is not a wound. The stroke becomes a wound when the blade pierces the armour-plates. So with temptation. If it but ring against the armour all is well. If it cut through it has a poisoned blade. Temptation is not sin. Rather if it be rightly used it is a lesson-book. Life has few teachers like temptation. One temptation bravely met is worth the reading of a hundred books.

I. For in the first place temptation *shows us what we are*. If life were all sunshine, every lad would be a hero. But when the clouds gather, and the thunders clap, we see the cowards then. The battered hulk sails gallantly on the summer sea. But blow! thou winter's blast, and the rotten timbers part like matchwood. That house built in July—do not be sure of it till March has come and gone. So with



the soul, the life. I ask not how it fares in summer weather. I want to see it in temptation. That is the hour of revelation, of insight, of knowledge. Alone with your temptation, what are you *then*? That is the question. Every temptation is a judgment hour. Had Jericho been a poorhouse, Achan might have died an honoured soldier. Had Potiphar been a widower, we could all have been pure Josephs. But Achan, Joseph, you and I, all stand in our true selves in temptation's hour. Blessed knowledge. Blessed bitter experience! To get one glimpse of what we really are.

II. And then too temptation is *like pain*. It shows us that danger is about. Pain and temptation! both are great mysteries; and yet rob life of them, and life is robbed of two clear trumpet-notes that tell of danger. If you are never tempted, Jesus have mercy on you! Not to be tempted at all would be life's fearfullest temptation. Here is a man whose foot is in an agony. The pain is terrible, piteous. But in a month we return. The pain is gone. Pierce that poor foot. It feels nothing. It is dead, mortified, lost. Better the wildest agony than that. So with the soul. Better most terrible temptation than to sin and fall, and fall and sin, without a fear, without a pang. Temptation is the soul's bugle-call that the enemy is near. And with the bugle-call there is the girding of armour to the battle. Well said old Jerome in a letter to a friend, 'Then art thou most terribly assaulted when thou art ignorant of the assault'. And well said Jeremy Taylor too, 'In the deepest peace and silence of spirit oftentimes is our greatest danger; not to be tempted is sometimes the subtlest temptation of all'. Young friends, temptation is sore. But I shall tell you one thing sorer. It is to be so completely Satan's slave that it would not pay him to tempt you any more. God keep you all from that.

III. Now mark where temptation comes with greatest power. To most it comes just at the weakest point and in the weakest moment. Not a soul but has a flaw in its armour. Achilles has always his unprotected heel. And to that weak spot temptation will come. You may hide your weakness from everybody. You cannot hide it from your temptation. As surely as sickness flies to the weakest part of your body, so surely will temptation fly to the weakest part of your soul.

What is the weakest point with you? I think I shall give a twofold answer to that question.

1. It is very likely to be the point where you have fallen in time past. Satan will not go to the trouble of planning a new temptation for you, if there be any old one handy. If the garden-gate has a shaky sneek, he will never trouble to climb the wall. Young people, watch! watch! watch at the gate where sin has entered again and again. That gate has been open so often that Satan thinks he has a right to come through it. There will be a wild struggle the first time you bar it in his face. But bar it! bar it in Jesus' name. That was a gallant

deed in Scottish history when the fierce nobles, searching for King James, thundered at the chamber-door, and the fair lady thrust her hand into the rings and held the door fast by a living bar of flesh. You are no Stuart king; but there is some One here to-night who will do that for you.

Thou hast an arm that's full of power,

A hand that's great in might,

And Thy right hand excedingly

Exalted is in height.

2. Again your weakest point is perhaps the very point where you think that you are strongest. I wonder now if any day last week any of you were talking about that most interesting subject in the world—yourself. And you said, 'Well, well, I'm this or I'm that, I'm hasty or I'm proud, I admit, but I never could do such a mean nasty thing as So-and-so did'. Watch yourself *there*! Satan has got his eye on you just there, where you think you could never fall.

Now if you ask me for guidance in resisting temptation, I fear I have no counsel save that which is old as the hills.

1. Resist beginnings. Tamper not. Handle not. A child can dam the streamlet at its source, but the sons of Anak cannot stop it when it becomes a river. Set guards at every gate of the great city of Mansoul—eye-gate, ear-gate, mouth-gate—and challenge every comer. Do not deliberate how far you can go without falling. Bethink you, you have gone far enough if you are not to fall. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

2. Continue to resist. The battle's never over. There's many a soul been lost, because it won. Won in the first onset, then said, All's well, and became careless. But the angels are gathering for war again, and the soul is taken after all. It is not always the first or second or third attack that works the havoc. For then the man is fresh and watchful. It is when the heart is careless again, and has forgotten the sting of the old sin, *that* is the moment of danger. How often are you to forgive? Till seventy times seven. Just so often must you resist. Not once, not twice, not in fine moments and noble hours alone, but daily, drearily, determinedly, forgive your brother and fight your foe.

3. Remember that the great day of your life is to-day. *This*, and none other, is your hour of crisis. Your farthest-reaching battle is your present one. And every coming trial, triumph, fall, is being determined now. Life is not built like modern merchantmen in separate compartments. Life is a piece. Life is one grand sweet song. Touch but a single string of that harp mystical with note of triumph, and all the chords will vibrate victory. A thousand unrecorded triumphs, and in the great trial you shall triumph. A thousand secret failures, and in the great hour, wreckage. We make or mar to-morrow by to-day. The Holy Ghost is saying to-day.

4. Try to remember that God sees you. Practise His presence, and it will help you mightily. Say,

'Thou God seest me,' and think you are never alone.

I remember reading the story of a little girl, who went into the attic to steal the apples that were stored there. On the wall there hung the portrait of some long-dead and forgotten family ancestor. And into whatsoever corner our little friend might turn, the eyes of her forefather seemed to follow her and search her to the heart. At last in desperation she got the scissors and cut out the eyes. And now her case was only worse. For the empty circles like gaping sockets seemed to track her now. There was no escape. And the eyes of God follow us like that, in love and helpfulness, not in anger, if we be His true children in Christ Jesus. If we ascend into heaven, He is there. If we make our bed in hell, He is there. If we take the wings of the morning, and fly into the uttermost parts of the sea, we are not beyond Him there. Try to live daily in the thought that God sees us, guides us with His eye, for so we shall be strong in the Lord and in His might.

5. Lean hard on Jesus Christ. Pray to Him. Cling to Him. Work for Him. Refuse to let Him go until He bless thee. And though thou go maimed like Jacob all thy days, thou wilt be blessed indeed.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 135.

### THE THREE TEMPTATIONS

MATTHEW IV.

I. A young man might have been seen one day, faint and weary, in a wild desert and among wild beasts in an eastern land. He was exhausted with hunger, and the marks of it were on His face.

Poor and haggard and hungry though He looked, He was the Son of a King, and was even in that desert on the way to His kingdom.

The wonderful thing was that it was His Father who sent Him into the desert, and suffered Him to be without food for many days. A still more wonderful thing was that when He was suffering the sharpest pangs of hunger and ready to perish, He did not doubt His Father's love, nor that His Father's way of bringing Him to His kingdom was the best.

But one day a stranger came up to Him and said, 'You are the Son of that King of whom everybody has heard, and to whom this wilderness belongs. If You be His Son, why should You remain hungry? Bid the wilderness provide a table for You. Turn these stones into bread.'

Now this young man could actually have turned the stones into bread. That would have satisfied His hunger. That might save His life. That was a way which at the moment might have seemed right. But He knew that it was not right. His Father had sent Him into the wilderness; His Father had sent Him hunger instead of bread; and He knew His Father to be wise and good and loving. 'No,' He said to the stranger, 'I will follow My Father to the end—trust Him to the end—trust Him through hunger and faint-

ness—trust Him even to death. My Father's love is better to Me than bread.'

This stranger was a very deceitful man; but he saw at a glance that the King's Son was resolved to go forward on the path of trust. So he followed the young man until they came to the capital town of the kingdom, and by and by they went up to the high towers of the temple.

'It is a great thing,' said the stranger once more, 'to be a King's Son, and especially the King's Son You are. Your Father cares for You every moment, and would not suffer a hair of Your head to be hurt. His servants follow You, watch over You, care for You. Suppose—since You are cared for in this way, and the King's Son—You cast Yourself down to the court below. See, there is a whole army ready to receive You in their arms!'

The young man simply said, 'To trust My Father's care when I am in the way of obedience and duty is one thing; to put it to the test in the way you propose, as if I disbelieved it, is another. It would be tempting My Father. And it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the King.'

So the stranger saw how noble this youth was, and how kingly and well fitted to reign. And he took Him to a high mountain, and showed Him all its glory, and the glory of all the kingdoms on the earth, and said, 'All these will I give unto Thee, if Thou wilt love me and trust me as Thou lovest and trustest Thy Father'.

But the young man turned round upon him in anger, and said, '*Get thee behind Me!* for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.'

Then the stranger left Him. And the heavens opened, and 'angels came and ministered unto Him'; and the smile of the Father shone round about Him like a great light; and far up in the depths of heaven there were songs of victory. For this was none other than the Son of God, and the stranger was the devil who sought to lead Him out of the right way.

II. That is an old story; but it is also new. It is the story of our daily and hourly temptations. It is the story of the attempt made by the Evil One to win us over to his side. In a thousand different forms in this very country, and just now, that is taking place which took place eighteen hundred years ago in the wilderness of Judea. I could not hope, if I tried it, to give you any idea of the countless variety of forms in which those three temptations come to us; but I will take you along one or two of the many lines of life in which they are to be found, and mention their names.

1. The first is the temptation of *hunger*: If you think a little, you will see that everybody has to toil for bread. Now the devil often comes to people who have to toil, and says, 'Bread is everything. Turn everything into bread—turn your skill and your time, and your talent, the ships, and the docks, and the railways, and the banks, and the Sunday-schools, and the churches into bread. If you are Christians,

and Christ is in the sky, He will help you to do that. You are pinching yourselves, and spending time on religion and churches and missions and such things, which your more sensible neighbours spend in enjoying life.' Many are deceived by these words, and turn aside from a religious life, and give all their soul, and strength, and life, and power just to labour for bread. A good table with plenty to eat and drink on it—that is the one grand aim of life for them. And they forget God, and the Bible, and heaven, and go blindly on, labouring and toiling, and working for only the fine dinners, and forgetting that they cannot live on bread alone.

2. After that comes the temptation to *presumption*.

There are thousands of Christians—men and women—who nobly fight against the first temptation, and resolve not to spend all their soul and strength for bread; but, on the contrary, even when bread is not to be had, to keep the desire for God and truth and right above the desire for bread in their hearts. And again and again people of this stamp will say, 'Although God should take all our bread from us, we will put our trust in Him'.

The devil sees that people who act in this way are full of trust in God; and in a very cunning way he tries to get round them by the very strength of this trust. He puts this thought into their minds: 'Trust is a good thing—one of the best of things. One cannot have too much of it, especially if he is a Christian. Christians are God's children, and are free to trust Him in everything. God has promised to bring them all right at last. May they not trust Him then in perilous things—in risks, in daring ventures, even in leaps in the dark? God takes good care of His children. He gives His angels charge over them, lest they dash their feet against the stones.'

Many are wise and cast out such thoughts, and shut their eyes on these dangerous ventures. But others are caught by the temptation and lose themselves. And what they find in the end is only bitterness and remorse and shame.

3. There is still another temptation beyond this one. Even those who resist the temptation to presumption are often taken, as the Lord was, to where they can see the grand things of earth, and tempted with the temptation of *pride*, the temptation of reaching grandeur and influence by a single evil step. The temptation works in many ways; but sometimes it comes in the form of an advice from one who pretends to be a friend, to go into an evil trade.

'Don't you see how life is slipping past, and you are losing your chances?' this evil counsellor will say. 'You want to be in a higher position: you think if you were, you would have more influence for good. That's the very thing I say about you every day. Why are you so slack, then, to ascend to this position? Did you see that mansion we passed? It is owned by a rich friend of mine. Everybody speaks of him as "the eminent tradesman". He will be a baronet some day, and he will

leave, by the profits of his trade, a million of money to his children. Do as he is doing. Give up strictness and sentiment. Go in for money-making in his way. You cannot help it, if the way be evil, or if the trade be evil. Somebody must be in that trade. Other people follow that way. And by that way and that trade, sooner than otherwise, you shall have the means of doing good.'

Counsels like these fall dead on the hearts of God's real children. But sometimes they are addressed to those who are only His children by name. And ah, there are many, under such advice, who break off from Christ's way, and follow the devil's, and are ruined for ever! They see splendour of social position, and fine living, and fashionable society, and carriages and grand mansions and fine entertainments—all passing like a panorama before them, and offering to become theirs—if only they will fall down and worship the devil to the extent of following an evil trade, or trading in an evil way'.

III. Once upon a time there were two brothers, and one was rich and the other neither rich nor poor. The rich brother had made his riches in an evil way and by an evil trade. But the brother who was neither rich nor poor said: 'It is better to be poor than rich, if the riches come by evil means'. It happened that this brother had three sons, but the rich brother had no children at all.

It came to pass, in course of time, that the brother who was neither rich nor poor was about to die. And he called his three sons to his bedside and said: 'I have spent all I had to spare in giving you education, and I have nothing to leave you except my mill. Be good and honest, and God will not suffer you to want. I leave my mill in equal shares among you. But the eldest shall be master, so long as he lives, and then the next eldest, and after him the youngest.'

When the good man was dead and the funeral over the eldest son stepped into his father's place, and the other two continued to serve as before. And time went on, and trade increased. And all things would have gone well if the one who was master had not gone on a visit to his rich uncle. But he was so feasted there and had such plenty of rich food to eat that he could not look on the simple fare at the mill without disgust. So he said to himself, 'What is the use of our increasing profits and of our toils, if we are not to have fine food like my uncle. Why still live on barley bread and milk as our father did? Then he put the old ways of the house aside, and had fine dinners and wine to drink. And he gave and accepted invitations to parties. And by and by, hardly a day passed in which he was not dining out, or having a dinner party at the mill. If his father had come back, he would not have known the old house again. Nothing was heard of in all the country side but news of the feasting at the mill, and the other feasts to which that feasting led. All the talk at the country fairs, where the people met, was about the last feast and the feast to come. One would have thought, to hear this talk, that



man's chief end was to eat fine dinners every day. But all this came to an end, and an end that was not good. At one of those feasts, in a neighbour's house, the poor man drank so much wine that he did not know what he was about when coming home. And instead of coming down from his horse at the doorstep, he came down at the very edge of the mill-pond and was drowned.

So there had to be a second funeral. And after that the second son became master. He was different from his brother in some things. He was no drunkard, and he did not spend his time in feasting. But he was a little impatient. And it was a trouble to him to go round the right way if he could get a shorter cut across. What troubled him most was the slow growth of the money at the bank. Although the mill was prospering the profits were small. And this was a cross to him. It happened to him also to be the worse for a visit to his rich uncle. When he was at his uncle's he saw heaps of bank-notes which had been got in a single day. And he came home thinking sorrowfully that the toil of a mill was a slow toil. One day a stranger came up to him at the mill and said: 'We have found lead in the hills out there, and only want a little money to dig it out, and make thousands upon thousands in a single year'. It was the very chance the miller wanted. He could not sleep for thinking of it. He saw the thousands coming in like a flood. And he would have bank-notes as many and as soon as his uncle. Now this poor fellow was a very good miller, and was doing well with the mill. And his brother and himself were slowly getting to be well-to-do; but he was as ignorant as a baby about lead and lead hills, and the expense of working lead mines. To give out his savings would be a risk—he saw that clearly enough. To risk his brother's means would be wrong—he saw that too. But on the other hand, if the mine succeeded he would be as rich as his uncle, and he would get to that riches in a single year. So he got out of his bed very early next morning, and took his Bible and began to search it to see if it said anything about a case like his. He found in one place that God would make everything work together for good to those that loved Him, and in another that God would suffer no evil to befall His children. He said to himself—'I hope I love God and am one of His children'. Then he knelt down and committed his way, as he thought, to God, and then he felt stronger and happier. It was a great risk—he saw that very clearly. But he thought God would take care of him. And he would put all his trust in Him.

He forgot that the good God has given no promise to help people in their folly, or in their wrong-doing. And he knew it was wrong to put his brother's portion in peril. But he hoped it would all come right, and even that his brother would thank him for what he had done. So he sat down and wrote to the stranger, and told him to buy as many shares in the lead-mines as the mill was worth.

Everything seemed very bright for a week or two—but only for a week or two. A letter came from a lawyer to say that the expenses of working the mines were greater than had been expected, and that more money would be needed. And after that a second letter demanding more still, and saying: 'It would be a pity to have paid out so much and not pay out a little more to get it back'. The miller began now to see that his bank-notes were not so certain as he once thought, but he could not draw back. He sent off the last penny his brother and himself had in the world.

And a year went past. And one day a letter came to him to say that the lead-hill had been searched and only a little lead found, and the expenses were far beyond the payments, and he would have to send twice the sum he had already paid. He did not answer this letter, but simply gave it to his brother to read. Then he said: 'Brother, I have risked everything and lost—lost all—yours as well as mine—forgive me—I thought I was doing it for the best'. Then he rose, went up to his bed, and died of a broken heart.

In a short while there was another funeral, and then a sale. The mill, and the house, and the horses, and the cows, and the fields were all sold, and the money taken for the wretched mines. And the youngest brother was left without a penny, or a home, or a friend, in the whole world.

But when the sale was quite over, and he was about to leave the house in which he had been born, a man came up on horseback and gave him a letter to read. It was from his rich uncle. And it was full of kind words. The uncle was old, and had no children to inherit his riches. This third nephew had always been a favourite with him. He had offered to adopt him when the father was living. He renewed the offer now. He would make him his son and heir if only he would come into the trade, and promise to carry it on when the uncle was dead. I told you before that it was an evil trade, and one on which God's blessing could not rest. But the young man was touched by his uncle's kindness, and he told the messenger he would bring his answer to his uncle himself.

So he went back into the empty house, and sat down on the trunk in which his clothes were packed. There was no fire on the hearth, but it was there he sat, where he had so often seated himself in happier days. It was not every day such an offer came to a man. All that would be his, if he accepted it, came before his mind: the splendid seat in the country, the fine house in town, the multitude of servants, the carriages, the fine society, the high position, the possible rank he might attain to. All this, and visions of a future in which all this had place, floated before him and came round about him. And voices seemed to speak from the depth of his soul and say: 'All this will be yours if you accept your uncle's offer'.

But he must also accept the evil trade. He thought of his dear father's honourable life—of his father's

refusal to accept the same offer on this condition—and of his father's spirit as perhaps watching over him at that very moment. Then he raised his thoughts to his Father in heaven and cried for strength. Then, when a long forenoon had been spent in the cheerless, empty house, he rose up and trudged a long way till he came to his uncle's, and thanked him for his kindness, but declined his offer because of the evil trade.

I do not know what became of the uncle, nor what he did with his riches. But the young man who refused the splendid offer came back to the village in which he had spent his boyhood, and went into a neighbour's mill to serve. And after a while he married his master's daughter. And although he never got to be very rich he was very happy, and had a clean heart and clean hands, and lived in favour both with God and man.

May God help you to resist temptation as this younger brother did—as our blessed Lord did. And always remember this, that in business, in home, in life, in love, in everything, it is just—*With Christ, or Without Christ*. That makes all the difference in the world, at the journey's end.

Christ has come down from heaven to open for us the way to heaven itself, and to guide us thereon to the end.

He is saying even now—'Follow Me, and I will bring you to all good things, to happiness, to fortune, and to enduring riches'.

May the Holy Spirit give you the grace to believe that He is speaking truth, and help you to follow Him along all His ways!

May He open your eyes to see, and your hearts to understand His love!

Your ways, after that, are sure to be ways of pleasantness, and all your paths, paths of peace.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 21.

### BEING TEMPTED

'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.'—MATTHEW IV. I.

We are going to talk this afternoon about 'Being Tempted'. Jesus was 'tempted'. Who can tell me—can you tell me—without looking—the first word of the fourth chapter of St. Matthew? Will you look? '*Then*.' A very important word. Always look at the little words of the Bible; and always look at the word '*then*'. '*Then*' is a very important word in the Bible. When? When?

I will ask you another question—Are we most likely to be 'tempted' when we are good or when we are naughty? When we are good. Are we most likely to be 'tempted' when we have been with good people or with bad people? With good people. Are we most likely to be 'tempted' when we have been doing some good thing or some bad thing? Some good thing.

Which is the man that the robber attacks—the man who has got a full purse or the man who has got an empty purse? The man who has got the full purse.

Then, which is the man the adversary will attack—the man who has an empty heart or the man who has a full heart? The man whose heart is full.

'*Then*.' '*Then*'—when Jesus had been fasting and praying—just after he had been baptised—just after God had said, '*This is my beloved Son!*'—*then*, 'then came the tempter.'

When you least expect it, *then* 'the temptation' comes!

'Led up into the wilderness to be tempted.' Then did the Holy Ghost 'tempt' Him? Does God 'tempt' us? Yes. Does Satan 'tempt' us? Yes. Do we 'tempt' ourselves? Yes. Then Satan 'tempts' us; the Holy Ghost 'tempts' us; and we 'tempt' ourselves.

*God 'tempts' us?* Is that quite true? Look at the first verse of the twenty-second of Genesis. Will you read it with me? '*God did tempt Abraham*.' Will you look at the twelfth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the seventh verse? I want you to understand that verse, the end of it: '*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me*'. Satan's messenger, to buffet him, and it was God's gift! It was God's gift—Satan's buffeting him! That is true. Satan's buffetings are God's gifts. '*There was given to me a buffeting of Satan*.' Yes, God 'tempts' us to *try* us, to *prove* us, to *do us good*.

Is it, then, a good thing to be 'tempted,' or a bad thing to be 'tempted'? Quite a good thing. I should be very sorry if you were not 'tempted'. It is a very good thing to be 'tempted'. Jesus was 'tempted.'

Supposing I made a very wonderful steam engine and put it into a ship to make it into a wonderful steam packet; it is all beautifully made and complete, and I want to 'try' whether it is all good—whether the machinery is right and works well—where should I send it, into a smooth sea or a rough sea? Should I send it 'up the rapids'—up the river—against the stream, against a waterfall, to see whether it would go up? I should.

So God does with you. He furnishes you with everything you want, then puts you up to the 'rapids,' sends you on the rough water, just to 'try' you, to see what you are made of.

Those beautiful Eastern swords (there are more beautiful swords in Asia than in Europe) are made of such fine steel, that men can bend them double without breaking them. In order to 'try' them, when they are being made, men do bend them double, to see if they can possibly break them. So God 'tries' you—to see what you are made of. It is a good thing to be 'tempted'. Luther said, '*Prayer and temptations make the Christian*'.

Now I am going to ask you this. We are going to think about Jesus Christ's 'temptation'. Will you try to think?—Why was Jesus Christ 'tempted'? Can anybody tell me? Why was Jesus Christ 'tempted'? I can think of three reasons. Will you

think of three? Will you think of one? Why was our dear Saviour 'tempted'?

I. I think the first thing was that *He might feel with us when we are 'tempted'*. Look at the fourth chapter of Hebrews and the fifteenth verse. It is about Christ. He is called a 'High Priest'. Will you read it with me? 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' '*Tempted 'like us!*' So that when anybody is being 'tempted' they might say: 'O dear Jesus! Thou knowest how hard it is to be "tempted"! Thou knowest how hard it is to conquer the "temptation"! Help me, dear Lord, help me—for Thou hast been "tempted"! Thou canst feel for me! Thou hast been through it all! Help me, Jesus! *Help me, Jesus!*'

I advise you to do that when you are going to be 'tempted'. Remind Jesus that He was 'tempted'. 'Thou knowest that I want help; O my Lord, *help me!*'

That is one reason why Jesus was 'tempted,' that He might have sympathy for us, that He might feel with us, when we are being 'tempted'. Because we can never quite feel with anyone until we feel the same thing, then we have real sympathy. Jesus has sympathy.

II. Let us think of another reason. Think of the next. *To show us what we are to do when we are tempted.* What did Jesus do when He was 'tempted'? Tell me this. Jesus was 'tempted' three times; and each time He said three words, the same each time. What were the words? '*It is written.*' Each time He said, 'It is written'. That is, He quoted out of the Bible. He took the Bible, and conquered the devil. What book of the Bible did He take the words from? Did He take them from the same book? Yes, all of them. A book you do not care much about, perhaps. I do not think you do. 'Deuteronomy.' Do you care much about your Deuteronomy? Is it a book you turn to often? Do you often read Deuteronomy? I advise you to do so, when you get a little older. Jesus loved Deuteronomy dearly. He always quoted out of Deuteronomy. How did He know it? Was it because He knew everything? Not a bit of it. How did Jesus know it? He loved it when a boy, when at Nazareth, when He lived with His mother and Joseph. He loved the Bible and learned out of the Bible. He had got His 'sword' ready when He was attacked. For He loved the Bible when a boy. You must be a good swordsman.

Do you know how to use your sword? Whether you are a boy or girl, when you are attacked you must use your sword. 'It is written.' Bring a text out of the Bible. That will conquer the tempter. That was the way Jesus acted. Oh! the Bible is a wonderful book!

We read that Oliver Cromwell had in his army one regiment—a fine, strong regiment—called 'The Ironsides'. They were very religious men. They might have been mistaken in some things; but they

were very religious. And it was quite the custom for almost every soldier to carry his Bible to battle with him. They used to carry their Bible under their dress; and more than once, in a battle, the soldier would have been shot through the heart but for his Bible. The bullet went through his Bible, or it would have gone through his heart. The Bible saved the heart!

The Bible will often save your hearts in another battle. Know your Bible. Love your Bible. That is the sword that Jesus had. He was our pattern—to show us what we ought to do when we are 'tempted,' and how to use the Bible.

III. Let us think of a third thing. *Encouragement to conquer.* Supposing you were to go out to Asia, or somewhere, and there was to attack you a great serpent. Supposing a great serpent came out of the grass and attacked you; say, a boa constrictor. And supposing, when you looked at him you thought—'Oh! dear, why, his head is crushed; he will not hurt me much. I won't be afraid of that serpent.' It would be a very little thing to fight with a serpent if his head was crushed! You have to fight with a serpent; but his head is crushed. Jesus crushed his head. You need not fear him very much, because his head is crushed. Jesus was 'tempted,' but He *conquered*. Therefore, when fighting, remember you have Jesus on your side. Jesus has fought the same battle. He has crushed the serpent's head!

In the old Roman times there was a great Roman general to whom one of his soldiers said: 'Oh! the enemy are so many! We are not half so many as the enemy! The enemy is twice as many as we are.' The general said to him, '*How many do you count me for?*'

Do you understand? There are 'more with us than there are against us'. Jesus is with us. How many do you count *Him* for? If you had to fight with a legion of devils, which is six thousand! remember, you have *One* with you who is more powerful than the six thousand. Jesus is with you!

These are the three reasons: *sympathy, pattern, encouragement.* He can feel with us when we are 'tempted'. He shows us what to do when we are 'tempted,'—and assures us that we shall fully conquer when we are 'tempted' if we only try.

Now I want to look, if you please, at *what Jesus' 'temptations' were?* How many were there? 'Three'.

1. What was *the first* thing Satan asked Jesus to do? To 'make stones into bread'. Was He hungry? Yes. Why was He hungry? Because he had 'fasted forty days and forty nights'. Then the 'temptation' just entered into His feelings? Do 'temptations' always enter into our feelings and circumstances? Do they? He asked Him to 'make bread'. What was the first word that Satan said to Him? '*If.*' Do you like the word 'if'? I do not. '*If.*' '*If*' Thou be the Son of God.' '*If.*' '*If.*' I do not like the word. It is generally very bad. '*If.*' '*If.*'



Sometimes it is good ; but it is so doubtful. Just as at the first. 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' A sort of 'if'. Is it really so? Satan is very fond of 'if'. Do not pay attention to the 'if'.

Why did Satan say then, 'If Thou be the Son of God'? Why just *then*? Can you think of the reason? Can you tell me? Because God had just said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. That is at the end of the chapter before—at His baptism. Then Satan says, 'If you are the Son of God—if it is true—then make these stones bread'.

Could He have made those *stones* 'bread'? Yes. What could not God make out of 'stones'? He once said some strange thing He could make out of a 'stone'. He could make 'children' out of 'stones'. 'Out of these stones I can make children unto Abraham.' Certainly, then, He could turn 'stones' into 'bread' if He liked.

Would it have been *wrong* to make the 'stones' *bread*? Yes. What would He have shown if He had done so? Answer me this, please. If Jesus had made those 'stones' *bread*, what would it have shown in Jesus' mind? Would not it have shown that *He did not trust God*, that God would feed Him? If He worked a miracle, would it not have shown that He did not trust in His providence? Yes, it would have been *want of faith*. That was the first 'temptation'. Distrust. Getting His 'bread' not in God's way. Distrust of God's providence. Is God sure to give us 'bread'? Yes. Is He sure to give us plumcake? No. He is sure to give us 'bread'; but He is not sure to give us plumcake. He has not promised that. But he is sure to give us 'bread'. We must not get our 'bread' in a wrong way!

2. Now let us look at the *second temptation*. Will you tell me what the second was? The first was distrust, getting bread the wrong way. But what was the second? Satan asked Him to throw Himself from the Temple. Where did the devil take Jesus? He took Him into Jerusalem, into the Temple; and he took Him up into what was called Herod's tower. It was a very high tower indeed. It was more than 200 feet high. And the walls of the tower went straight down a precipice to the valley of Jehoshaphat, where the brook Kedron ran along. By standing at the brook Kedron you would look up a high precipice, 200 feet high. Above that, this tower of Herod stood, 200 feet higher; so it was altogether nearly 450 feet high; higher than St. Paul's; higher than the Monument; higher than any building in England, take it altogether. The devil took Him, and put Him on the pinnacle of Herod's tower, looking down this tremendous precipice; and he said to Him, 'If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down'. Perhaps he thought, 'How fine it will look to all the people!' or perhaps Satan thought that Christ would not have faith enough to trust God. He quoted a pas-

sage out of the Bible. Do you know where he quoted it from? The ninety-first Psalm. It was very strange that the devil quoted the Bible. But he very often does. He knows a great deal; but he turns it to bad account. Satan very often turns the Bible to bad account by quoting it in a wrong way. I wish everybody who can read in the church would read with me the eleventh verse of the ninety-first Psalm: 'For He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways. They shall bear Thee up in their hands, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone'. Now turn to the fourth of St. Matthew, and the sixth verse: we will read it together: 'If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone'. Where is the difference? What is the difference between the verse in the ninety-first Psalm and the verse in St. Matthew? '*To keep Thee in all Thy ways*' is left out. The devil left that out. Now 'the Angel,' i.e. God, will 'keep us in all our ways,' *our proper ways*. But if we go out of 'our' proper 'ways,' will He 'keep' us then? No. That was the important thing. Like the hinge on the door. If we do not 'keep' in our (proper) ways, God will not 'keep' us. The ways of duty are where we ought to go;—let us always look at that. If Christ had thrown Himself from that pinnacle, what sin would He have committed? What is the right word? Would it be right if I said, 'It would be rash'? or would not it be 'presumption'? Which is the best word—'presumption' or 'rashness'—which do you think? I should call it 'presumption'. He would have gone out of His own proper way, trusting God would take care of Him when He knew He was not in His proper path.

If you find God has promised anything, you may push it as far as ever you like: 'Oh, do, Lord! do give it me'. You may go on ever so long if God has promised it. But if He has not promised it, do not press it, because that is 'tempting' God. Then it may be with you like it was with the Israelites: He may give you your desires, but your souls will be the *worse* for it. He may 'send *leanness* into your souls'.

3. Now look at the *third temptation*. What was the third? Satan 'showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,' and asked Him to worship him. How do you think Satan looked then? Ugly? Would he be likely to look ugly? Which should we be most likely to 'fall down and worship'—a handsome man, or an ugly man? one, looking grand like a king, or one very miserable? I have no doubt Satan looked excessively beautiful. 'Fall down and worship me,' he said to Christ; 'and if you will, I will give you all this glory.' If Christ had done so, what would have been His sin? Remember, if He had done the first thing Satan wanted Him to do, He would have shown want of trust; if

He had done the second, it would have been presumption; and if He had done the third, what would it have been? He would have shown that He *loved the world too much*. Is not the world belonging to Christ? Is not it all going to be His? What would have been the sin if He had taken it then? *Taking it too soon*, and in the wrong way. He will have it all one day. *But then* it would have been too soon, and in the wrong way. Are there not a great many pleasant things in the world? Yes, very pleasant! But remember, *you must wait for your pleasant things*. You will have them all by and by. Everything you can wish. There are some pleasures of which you must say, 'I will wait for them. I shall be sure to have them by and by, but I won't take them at a wrong time and in a wrong way.'

Just two or three things in conclusion about 'temptation'. Will you listen to me? *Don't be 'tempted' if you can help it! Keep out of temptation's way!* What do we say in the Lord's Prayer? 'Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.' 'O God, do not "tempt" me. It is a great trial to be tempted. But if Thou dost, deliver me from the sin, deliver me from the evil. If Thou bring me into temptation, deliver me from the evil.'

But, *if you are 'tempted,' take out your sword*. What is it? The Bible. Where is the Christian sword? It is among the Christian's armour. Do you know where it is? It is in Ephesians vi. 17. 'The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.' Take care you know how to use it. Remember it. If some naughty thought would lead you wrong, try to think of a text, and it will help you.

The third thing is, when you are 'tempted,' *do what Christ did*. Do not go a single step. Stop at once. 'Resist the devil,' at once. Adam and Eve talked to the serpent; they parleyed with him. So they fell. Christ did not. He 'resisted him' at once: so He conquered.

I will tell you a fable they have in Arabia. It is an Arab fable. There was a miller in his comfortable tent. There came a camel, and he put in his nose at the door; and he said, 'Let me have my nose in; my nose is very cold. Let me put my nose in.' The man said, 'Yes, you may put your nose in'. Then the camel said, 'Let me put one of my fore feet in'. The man said, 'Yes, you may put in one of your fore feet'. Then the camel said, 'Let me put my neck in; you have let me put in my nose and one of my fore feet'. And he let him put in his neck, till at last the camel got in altogether; and when in he began to knock the furniture all to pieces. The man then said, 'I will thank you, camel, to go out at once.' 'I thank you,' said the camel, 'but you may go out.' And the miller had to go out; the camel would not go out at all.

I need not explain to you what it means. *Resist the little sins*. Do not let sins begin to come in.—

JAMES VAUGHAN.

## 'MAN CANNOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE.'

MATTHEW IV. 4.

I. In an old volume in my library there is a woodcut which I sometimes study. It is the picture of a little boy at a pastrycook's window. He is on his way to school. The morning is dark and stormy. The pavement is glistening with rain. But neither wind nor rain can force him to pass this window. Inside are piles of fancy bread, and cakes, and candies, and all sweet things. And there he stands, in the raw morning air, his right arm resting on the brass fence, his eyes fixed, his little heart going out in earnest longing for the delicious things inside that window. Not that he is a poor, ill-fed, hungry boy. His plump, round cheeks, his cosy cloak, and the end of a roll of bread sticking out of his pocket, tell that he is well fed and well cared for at home. But he is thinking to himself, as he stands looking in through that window: 'What are rolls of home bread, or home itself, or the school to which I am going, to the sweets and sugar cakes heaped inside there?'

That is the way with boys. For a long while of their lives they think that things to eat, especially sweet things, are the best things of life. Nuts shaken from the trees, berries gathered from the bush, apples dropped in the orchard, fish caught in the river by their own rod: boys think that life has nothing better than things like these. To go away to the woods or the rivers, to kindle a fire of leaves and dried branches of trees, to roast the nuts and the apples and the fish, and eat them without knife or fork, without table napkin or table, as hunters and wild Indians do: that seems to boys the very best joy that earth can give. If they were kings, and had as much money as they could tell, they would have dinners of that sort every day.

II. And boys who think in this way are not altogether wrong. Things to eat are really good things. And the good Lord who made us has made food sweet to our taste. Sometimes it will seem, even to grown-up people, that bread must be one of the best things in the world. When I see hungry children on the streets, I cannot help thinking what a blessing a good dinner every day would be to them. And when I pass old men and women whose white, pinched faces show that they have tasted little food that day, I cannot help thinking what a blessed thing good food would be to them. And I think the same thing as often as I read some of the sea stories which the newspapers tell.

Shipwrecked crews on lone rafts far out at sea, with never a sail in sight, with not even a bag of hard biscuit on board—driven to eat their very shoes for food—with hunger tugging at every heart, and at last with wild looks at each other, as the hunger is making them mad, and they are silently beginning to think that the lot must be cast, and the death of one become the life of all—in cases like that I do not wonder that people come to believe that land with birds on it, or a ship with food in it, or a bagful of

bread, would be the best thing the life of man could see or taste.

But I intend to show you that we cannot, even in such cases as these, be satisfied, or made happy, or wise, or strong, by bread alone. If we had all the bread the world contains, or all the money of the world to buy it with—if we were always able to go into woods and rivers and find food for ourselves, with companions whom we loved, we still could not have all that our hearts and lives need to have. By eating and drinking, by feasting with great people, or with wild people, whether on sea or land, in hunting-fields or palaces, neither boys nor men could be perfectly happy or contented or well.

III. I read a story once of some sailors on just such a raft as I have referred to. Their very dreams were of food, of which they had none. As they sat there on the raft—straining their eyes often to look for passing ships—visions of food of all kinds, of ripe fruits, and rich meats, and pastry, and bread honey-baked, floated before their souls. And each man said to himself, 'Oh, for one loaf such as my mother baked for us in the early days!' But the days went past and no ship appeared, and one by one, for want of bread, they began to die. After dreadful sufferings, the two who survived drifted to an island on which there were friendly natives and plenty of food. One died, but the other lived and spent some years on that island. He had food as much as he could eat, but he was not happy. He hunted, he fished, he learned to catch all kinds of birds. He lived in tents; he was treated as chief's son. But he was not happy. And one day, when an English ship happened to pass the island, he threw himself into the sea, and swam to the side, and said, 'Take me on board, and take me home to England; I will endure hunger and poverty and hard living rather than live longer here'. The man had as much food as he could eat—and on the lone raft no doubt he thought food the best thing; but you see he had found out that a man cannot live—cannot be happy—by bread alone.

IV. I always remember the way a young girl who lived where I once lived came to learn this truth. Her home was a lonely farmhouse away up among hills, and miles away from village or town. Living where she did, she knew nothing about the pleasures which town children have. No panorama, nor concert of sacred music, is ever seen or heard near such places. But she was not without pleasures; and there was one so sweet, so always new, that she thought it must be the very best pleasure in the world. About a mile from the farm was a hill on which gorse and heather and wild violets grew all the summer. Here and there were nut-trees, but the ground was mostly covered with bramble and bilberry bushes. The hours she spent there were the happiest in her life; and she thought a girl who had a bramble and bilberry hill had nothing more to wish for.

One day, in harvest time, she was at home with her mother and grandmother, and grandmother sud-

denly turned ill. It was a long way to the doctor's, and there was nobody to send but this child. The farmer and the servants were away helping a neighbour; the mother could not leave the sick grandmother; and this girl of ten years old must hurry away for the doctor. She lost no time in preparation; she dearly loved her grandmother, and her little feet seemed to fly along the road. It was the road on which the bilberry hill was, but she was not thinking of that. She was thinking only of the errand on which she was sent, and of poor sick grandmamma at home; and she was hurrying along as fast as her feet could carry her. But just as she came within sight of the hill, at the very bend of the road where the gap in the hedge was that led up to it, she saw, not a hundred yards off, a mad bull tearing along, and coming right up to meet her.

She could not go back. That never entered into her mind. To go forward was death. But here was her bilberry hill. She darted to the gap in the hedge through which she had so often passed. She fled up through the trees, thinking there might be some outlet, higher up, to another part of the road. There was no such outlet. A river on one side, a high close fence on the other, shut her in. She could only leave by the way she came; and there, to her horror, stood the furious bull. A whole hour went past, afternoon was melting into evening, and still she was a prisoner. The bull had planted himself right at the entrance, glaring up at her with a savage look. In that hour what whirls of thought drove through her soul! She thought of her poor old grandmother, of the pain she was suffering, of the possibility of her dying before the doctor could be brought. She thought of her mother's anxiety. At first she was sick with fear. Then that passed away, and she grew hungry. The hedges were covered with her favourite brambles; late bilberries also were hanging ripe at her feet and all around her. But she could not touch them. What were bilberries or brambles, or any other kind of fruit, or food to her now? It was liberty she wanted—liberty to go her message—liberty to bring help to the dear sick one at home. She never before thought there could be anything better in life than a bramble and bilberry hill; but she learned it that day.

Her whole young heart cried up to God for liberty to reach the doctor. Although she was in mortal terror of the bull she saw and remembered afterwards things as if she had no fear. She saw a hare running through a little space in the high fence, and wished she were a hare. She saw the birds flying about overhead perfectly free, and wished she were a bird. She cried with vexation; and what she cried for, although she could not put it in words at the time, was liberty to do her duty. 'Oh, to be out of this trap!' that was the shape her prayer took. 'Oh, Lord Jesus, send some one to drive away the bull!' And by and by, when the shadows of night began to fall, and while it was still not too late to bring the doctor, the Lord heard her cry, and sent some neighbours to let



her free. But that day she learned—and so learned as never to forget—that hills of brambles and bilberries cannot make people happy, and that times may come, even in a child's life, when she may be where the ground is covered with her favourite berries, and she not able to touch a single one.

V. One day a hunter was returning to his home, tired with the chase and faint with hunger. As he came near the tents in which his family lived, the air came about him filled with the fragrance of the richest soup. He quickened his steps. New light came into his eyes. The taste of the rich soup was already in his mouth. And just as he pushed back the curtain and stepped inside the tent, his brother was preparing to serve it out. The brother had gathered it, and prepared it, and cooked it, and it was all his own. And it was the only food in the tent that day. The famishing hunter said to his brother, 'Jacob, let me have some'. But Jacob was not a kind brother, and he said, 'If you buy it, you shall have some'. Esau at that time was fonder of food than anything else, and he was almost dying with hunger. So he said, 'I will give you anything you like, Jacob; but let me have the soup'. Then Jacob said, 'Give me your birthright'. It seemed at the time like asking nothing at all. The brothers were twins, but Esau had been born first. And Jacob could never get sorrow for that out of his mind. He was always wishing he had been born first. And now when this chance came, and his elder brother famishing and begging for food, he could not let the chance go. 'Let me be elder brother, Esau, and you shall have the soup.' Esau thought a very little over it—too little, as he came to see afterwards. He said to himself, 'What's the birthright to me just now?' He should not have said that. It was God who had made him elder brother. It was despising the gift of God. What's the birthright to me just now?' he said, still speaking to himself. 'It is food I want. I am dying for want of food, and here is food, and the best sort of food, that will be life, and strength, and joy to me. I must have it; I cannot live without it.' Then he turned to Jacob and said, 'I give you the birthright—give me the food'. He was a grown-up lad at that time. And there was no more said about it then. But when years had gone past, and the two lads were men, a day came when their old father had to acknowledge the birthright, and say with his dying lips which son was to be chief. When that day came, the old father was blind and seemed near to die. Jacob said to his mother, 'I bought the birthright from Esau'. And his mother took him one forenoon, when Esau was out hunting, and dressed him like Esau, and made the blind old father think it was the eldest son. And Jacob the younger got the blessing. And the blessing made the birthright his. Then Esau saw the folly he had done. He had sold for a red mess what God had given him. He cried like a child. 'Give me a second birthright,' he said to his poor vexed father, when he came and found what had been done. But there was only one

blessing to give, and Jacob had got it. In that hour Esau saw that man does not live by bread alone.

VI. In the great kingdom of Babylon there once reigned a king who thought man could live by bread alone. And one day he invited a thousand of his lords and ladies, princes and princesses, to a great feast in his palace. Every one was dressed in gold and silver, purple, scarlet, and fine linen. There was music floating all round. Slaves came out and in carrying meat and wine and flowers and fruit. And the tables were filled with guests. But when kings have had many banquets they begin to be tiresome, and this king thought he would do a thing at this feast which might keep the tire-omeness away. He remembered that Nebuchadnezzar his father had once been to Jerusalem, and had fought against the city and had taken away all the gold and silver vessels of the temple there. So Belshazzar the son commanded those gold and silver vessels to be sent for and brought to his great feast. And everybody praised the Hebrew vessels, and they were filled with wine, and went round all the guests, and every lord and lady drank wine out of these vessels. And the king said, 'Was never a feast like this; this is life, this is blessedness'. But the great God at that very moment thrust out His hand from the darkness, and with His finger wrote these words on the wall in a language neither the king nor his lords could understand: 'Oh foolish feaster, you need righteousness more than bread to make you happy. The God whose temple your father robbed of these vessels has numbered the hours of your kingdom. You have been tried as a king and found wanting. And your kingdom is about to be given to others.' Although for a long while nobody could read the words, it was something terrible to have them written on the wall in that way. Where now was the happiness the king had in his gold vessels and his wine? It was gone. He was filled with terror. All the glory of his banquet disappeared. What did that awful hand coming out of the darkness mean? What were those terrible letters on the wall? His face became white, his knees shook, the chill of death came over him. Before that feast was ended he and his lords and ladies learned that man cannot live by banquets alone, nor by drinking wine in vessels of gold and silver, nor by any other kind of feasting which is feasting on what the Bible calls 'bread alone'.

VII. Going back to the woodcut I described at the outset, I will make one more remark suggested by it. Sometimes when I look at it, it seems to say to me: 'It is not little schoolboys only who stop to look in at windows. We are all, big people as well as little people, like the boy at the window, only, as we grow older, the window changes, and the things inside change as well. Instead of the pastrycook's window, it is that of some neighbour richer than ourselves, or it is the avenue leading up to some noble mansion, or it is the door opening into some public banquet, or it is a marriage party, or a general's staff, or an as-

sociation of artists, or a fellowship of learned men, or the partnership of a merchant company, or a circle of high ladies of fashion.'

Yes, these are the windows through which, as we grow older, we look. And as the windows through which we look are different, the things inside are different too. It is a place inside those circles of rich, learned, and fashionable people. It is possession of the things which make this life seem so beautiful. It is the wedding coaches, the gay dresses, the high companions, the honourable titles, the splendid banquets, the magnificent homes. Ah, there are boys and girls who are now as young as the boy in my woodcut, and as fond of looking into pastrycooks' windows, who will come to think, as they grow older, and look through other kinds of windows at other sweet things in life, how much better it would be to be inside, among the rich, gay people, than out, and how poor and homely their lives are when compared with the lives at which they look. But it will be a vain thought whenever it comes. To have all the fine things we see in the possession of others, to dwell in stately houses, to have troops of servants waiting on us, to have carriages at our call, and great people for our friends, and great honours to our name, that is not our life. There are thousands and tens of thousands who have attained to all that and are not so happy as they were before.

In one of the iron districts of our country, about forty years ago, lived two young married people. The husband was a blacksmith, and very industrious and temperate. The wife was thrifty and otherwise good. They were happy, but not perfectly happy. He, especially, kept looking into the lives of the people who gave him work, and wishing he had comforts like theirs. Many a time, as he sat in a corner of his forge taking the dinner which his wife brought to him, he would say to her: 'I would have a carriage like this one, and a grand house like that one, and great banquets like theirs, and servants and rich dresses for you.'

And it really came out so that before twenty years were over he had all these things which he had so eagerly hungered after. He had a fine mansion to live in, a fine carriage to ride in, fine dresses for his wife, great feasts for his friends, and hundreds of people to serve him. A friend of mine was once invited to one of his parties and asked to stay over night. There was a grand banquet, and lords and ladies and other great people sat down to it. When the guests were all gone, and the three drew round the fire, the husband said to his wife, 'What did you think of our party?' And she said, 'Indeed, John, I was thinking all the time of it, that you and I have never been so happy, or good, as long ago when I used to take your dinner to the forge and wait till you had eaten it.' 'That same is my thought too at times,' said the husband.

They got the grandeur and the banquets they hungered for, you see, but their happy life they had left behind.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 211.

## SILLY JACK'S PARABLE

MATTHEW IV. 4.

I. 'MAN cannot live by bread alone.'

In order to live as God would like us to live, we need all the words which have come to us from God. Bread is only one of these words. Bread tells us of God's care for our bodies. But God is speaking to us by other things besides bread. The love with which our parents love us, and liberty, and truth, and justice, are all words which God has spoken and which we need as well as bread. To make us good, and wise, and happy, we need every good thing which has come to us from God.

One dark November night, a few years ago, two gentlemen in a gig were driving along the banks of the river Leven, and in a very lonesome part of the road they heard the cries of a child. Although they could see nothing, they knew by the cries that not far from the road a child was in great distress. They pulled up, and found that they were beside a graveyard, and, following the sound of the cries, they came up to a little boy, six or seven years old, lying all his length on a grave, and crying on the mother who lay below to come back to him. The mother had died a few days before, and home had lost its sweetness for the child. He would not leave the grave. 'I want to be beside mamma,' he said, when the gentlemen wished him to come with them. At last they got him to tell where he lived—it was four miles off—and, lifting him up in their arms, they drove to the door. It was a bright enough home, with no scarceness of bread or comfort in it. It only wanted a mother's love. The poor child had food, and clothes, and comforts, as much as he could enjoy; but even a child cannot be happy with food, and clothes, and comforts alone, but with every word that comes from the mouth of God. And the best word which had come from the mouth of God for this child had been his mother's love—and that was gone!

II. Yet even a mother's love is not enough. Moses had love from two mothers, and he had bread, and a bright home, and ease, and splendour, but he was not happy. Ever since the kind princess lifted him out of the ark of rushes, he had lived in a king's palace and been loved by the king's daughter. He was her adopted son. He might even become king himself some day. Servants waited on him to give him whatever he asked for. Tutors waited on him to teach him all that was then known. He had horses, and carriages, and yachts, and splendid clothes, and plenty of money, and everything this earth could supply to make a man happy. But he was not happy.

What he wanted more than all he had was justice and deliverance for his Hebrew kinsfolk. While he was feasting on king's meat in the palace, they were living on hard fare in the brick-kiln. While he was a free man, they were slaves. While he could say to guards and servants 'Go,' and they would go, 'Come,' and they would come, but I men were standing over his Hebrew kinsmen, with whips in their hands,

cutting into their flesh if they fainted with their toil. He had no peace day nor night. And everything reminded him of the sufferings of his people. If he went to town, he saw the bricks they had made being carried along the streets. If he went to the country, he came on the kilns where they were suffering. If he visited the brick-kilns, he heard the crack of the lash on every side of him, and the sharp cry of the lashed one's pain. Now and again, too, riding in a royal carriage, and dressed like a prince, a Hebrew would pass him on the road carrying straw for the bricks. And the poor bent form of the slave would straighten up, and his eyes would cast one look into the carriage, as much as to say, 'You there—I here!' And all these things cut into the soul of the young man. And he was very sad.

One day it happened to him to be near a brick-field. The air was filled with the sickening vapour of the clay. He saw crowds of his kinsfolk moving about at their dreary task. His heart was sore for their misery. Just at that moment a poor slave rushed out into the road, pursued by one of the taskmasters, his back all cut and bleeding with the lash, and fell dead at the feet of Moses. The hidden fountains of anger, which had been gathering and growing hotter within him for years, burst forth at the sight, and, rushing at the cruel taskmaster, he killed him in his wrath.

He knew well enough that his own life would be taken if it were known. But he had made up his mind. It was better to die than to live as he had been living. He could no longer live on splendid clothes and royal banquets. His soul wanted God's justice for his poor oppressed and trampled kinsfolk. His soul yearned for their deliverance. He knew how God meant them to become His people; and he wanted them to be free that they might go and be His people.

Dear to him, no doubt, was the love of his adopted mother, dear also the books he had learned to read; but a great voice from God was speaking in his heart, and bidding him leave Egypt and kings' houses, and prepare to work out the will of God in delivering His people. And he left all and went.

III. Hundreds of years ago, in one of the old Etruscan cities of Italy, there lived a young and wealthy lawyer whose name was Jacob Bendetti. He had a beautiful young wife, and he and she were once invited to a splendid ball.

Now something came in his way, so that the husband could not get to the ball at the beginning, and his wife had to go with some friends. But in a little while he arrived. When he came into the room everything was in confusion. His beautiful young wife had been seized with a sudden illness and there, or on the way home, she died.

Jacob was almost in despair. He gave up his business, sold all his possessions, gave his money to the poor, and became a minister of the gospel. People laughed at him for doing this. Always there are people who laugh at things noble or good. They

said it was so silly for a rich young fellow to cry as he cried for his wife, and to sell all he had and give all his money away. And there was another thing these people thought silly. He not only began to preach to poor people about Jesus, but he wrote poems, and prayers, and parables for them in their own mother tongue. 'Oh, so silly!' cried the people who used to go to balls with him. So they called him 'Silly Jack,' and he is known as Silly Jack to this day.

But it wasn't he who was silly; it was the ignorant and stupid butterfly people who had not sense to see that he was wise.

I was reading some notes about the life and writings of this man lately, and among these notes I came upon a parable which I thought would make a good sermon for the boys and girls I speak to.

The parable is this: 'Once upon a time there was a fair young maiden who had five brothers. One was a musician, the second was a painter, the third was a merchant, the fourth was a cook, and the fifth was a builder.

'Now this fair young maiden had a beautiful diamond which her father had given her, and each of the brothers wanted it for himself.

'The first who sought it was the musician. He came to her and said, "Sell it to me; I will play you some beautiful music for it". But she said, "And when the music is ended I should have nothing"; and she refused to sell her diamond for music.

'Then came the painter. "I will paint you a splendid picture for your diamond," he said. But she replied, "Your splendid picture might be stolen, or its colour might fade. I will not sell my diamond to you."

'Next came the merchant. "Oh, sister," he said, "I will bring you such spices and perfumes from the East in my ships as you never smelled the like of; and I will give you sweet smelling roses and lilies—a garden full." But she said, "The perfumes will cease to please me, and the roses and lilies will fade".

'Then the cook came up and said, "Dear sister, I will prepare for you a splendid banquet of the finest, richest things you could eat: give your diamond to me". But she said, "After the banquet I should be hungry again and my diamond gone: no, I will not sell it to you."

'Then the builder came. He offered to build her a beautiful palace to live in—a palace that might do for a queen. "But a palace is filled with cares, even to its queen," she said, "and I cannot sell my diamond for a house full of cares."

'At last, when all the brothers had been refused, came the prince of a great kingdom and said he wished to buy the diamond. "And what will you give for my diamond?" she asked. "I will give myself," he said; "myself, and all I possess." Hearing that, the young maiden answered, "I accept that gift. I will be yours and you shall be mine for ever." Whereupon she gave him the diamond.'



Now that is the parable, and here is the interpretation. The fair young maiden is you, or your sister, or any young person you know. The father is God. And the diamond given by the father is the soul. The five brothers are the five senses, each of which wishes to get the soul all to itself. The ear comes first, and wants the soul to give itself altogether to the pleasures of music. 'That is the great life,' it says, 'just to be going to concerts and listening to fine airs and fine songs'. The eye comes next and wishes the soul to give itself away to fine sights, beautiful paintings, beautiful statues, beautiful sights on the hills and the fields. And the other senses, one after another, come and want to get the soul all to themselves—to fine gardens, to fine parties, or to fine houses.

But the soul sees that all these things perish as they are used. The soul knows that ear, and eye, and smell, and touch, and taste are only little bits of one's being; and that it would never do to give itself away to a mere little bit of its being. The soul has learned that nothing can fill the whole being except God Himself who made it. And it says, 'What would it profit me though I should gain all that the five senses could bring to me if I were to lose my very self and be cast away?'

There are plenty of people who sell their souls for music, painting, fine dinners, and beautiful gardens, and fine houses. But no wise child will do it. No one who knows Christ will do it. Christ alone is worthy to have the soul. He gave Himself for the soul; Himself and all that He has.

And the wise maiden in the parable knew that. The pleasures of earth were nothing to her in comparison with Christ. 'What are fine parties, beautiful pictures, or splendid mansions, if at the end I should lose my soul?' So she gave her soul to Christ. And she got what was better than pictures, or palaces, or fine gardens. She got Christ Himself.

True happiness is to have Christ's love in our hearts. Does Christ love me? Do I love Christ? That child has begun to live the true life who can say 'yes' to those two questions. And that is the life which Jesus brought from heaven to us. He is offering it to us when He is telling about His Father's love. He is inviting us to it when He says 'Come unto Me'. Himself is the true life. Himself is bread, and life, and love. To have Jesus for our friend, and His life in our heart, is better than gold and silver, or fine mansions, or banquets with the great. It is the grand secret of a good life. It is the true way to happiness. It is a life that will never die. And it is the life which prophets and apostles and saints are living before God's throne in heaven.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 229.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF MEEKNESS

'Blessed are the meek.'—MATTHEW V. 5.

I wish to speak of *three* ways in which meekness brings a blessing even in this present life.

I. The *first* way is, **By saving us from Trouble.**—

Sometimes we hear persons complaining that the people around them are cross or disagreeable, when the real trouble lies in themselves.

One day a little boy, whose name was Johnny Wilson, came running into the house when his sister Mary was sewing. He held something in his hand which he had found in the yard. 'Oh, Mary,' said he, 'I've found a pretty thing. It is a piece of red glass, and when I look through it everything is red too. The trees, the houses, the green grass, your face, and everything is red.'

'Yes, it's very beautiful,' said Mary; 'and let me show you how to learn a useful lesson from it. You remember the other day, you thought everybody was cross to you. Then you were like this piece of glass, which makes everything look red, because it is red. When you feel cross and disagreeable, you think everybody around you is cross and disagreeable too. But when you are in good humour, and feel kind and pleasant yourself, other people will see just the same towards you.'

I remember hearing of a little boy who was taught this same lesson by his mother in a different way. They were on a visit in the country. At the edge of the woods, near the house where they were staying, was a very fine echo. Little George didn't understand about echoes. One day his mother was sitting on the porch, and he was playing near by. Something led him to call aloud. Presently the echo of his voice came back. He didn't know what it was, but supposed that some boy in the woods was calling to him. He stood still a while.

Then he cried 'Halloo!'—'Halloo,' was the reply. 'Who are you?'—'Who are you?' asked the echo. 'Clear out!'—'Clear out.' 'You're a scoundrel!'—'Scoundrel!' 'I'll thrash you!'—'Thrash you,' said the echo. He could not stand this. So he ran to the house. 'Mother, I don't want to stay here,' said he, 'there's some bad boy down in the woods who keeps calling me names, and threatening to whip me.'

'Oh, surely not,' said his mother, who had heard it all, and knew what it was.

'Yes, indeed there is then, for he has been calling me names, and saying naughty things to me.'

'Well, go out again,' said his mother, 'and tell him he's a good boy, and ask him to have an apple.'

So the little boy ran out towards the woods, and cried 'Halloo!'—'Halloo,' was echoed back. 'You're a good boy!'—'Good boy,' was the answer. 'I'll give you an apple!—You an apple,' was heard from the woods. Then he ran back to his mother, and said, 'Why, mother, there must be two boys in the woods, a good boy and a bad boy.'

'No, my child,' said his mother, 'there is no boy there at all. It's only the echo of your own voice that you have heard. When you speak kind and pleasant words, the echoes are kind and pleasant; and when you speak cross and rude words, the echoes you hear are just the same. Kindness is like a soft, gentle echo. If we speak loving words to others, loving

words will come back to us ; and it we do kind actions to others, kind actions will come back to us.'

A great while ago there was a little girl at school in France. One day she was walking with her companions in one of the public gardens in Paris. It happened that there was a soldier then on duty. He was suffering very much from thirst, but was not able to leave his post to go and get a drink. So he begged these young ladies to bring him a drink of water from a fountain not far off. The little girl's companions passed proudly on, and said it was very rude and impertinent in a common soldier to speak to them. But little Lucy had a kind and tender heart, full of meekness and gentleness, and she could not think of leaving a fellow-creature to want, when it was in her power to help him. So she ran and got some water, though her companions were scolding her for doing it. When she brought the water to the poor soldier, he drank it eagerly, and then thanked her heartily for it, and asked her to give him her name, and the name of the street and the number of the house in which she lived. She did this, and then went away.

Not long after this a dreadful massacre took place in that city of all the Protestants. Hundreds and thousands of them were cruelly murdered ! But that little girl was saved. The poor soldier had not forgotten her. He had been accustomed to scenes of cruelty and bloodshed, but that one kind action had made a deep impression on him. He sought out the little girl while the massacre was going on, and took her to a place of safety. And so she found that the echo of her kindness and gentleness came back to her amidst those fearful scenes of slaughter. Here you see how her meekness was a blessing to her in saving her from trouble.

II. The *second way* in which it is a blessing is, by **Doing Good to Ourselves.**—Meekness or gentleness is very much despised by some people, yet it is one of the mightiest things in the world. God is conquering the world to Himself by love—the love of Jesus in dying for us. And gentleness or meekness is the only way in which love shows itself in acting or speaking. A kind word, a loving, gentle voice or manner, has more power in it than all the harsh words that ever were spoken, or all the hard blows that can be given. It will subdue the stubborn will, smooth down the rugged, frowning brow, and work wonders. Why, even the dumb animals, though they don't understand what you say, yet know when you speak kindly to them.

A man was driving a loaded cart along the street one day. It was a heavy load the horse was drawing. At one place the horse did not turn in the way the carter wanted him to go. He was a cross, ill-tempered man, and he began to swear at the horse, and lash him with his whip. Still he would not go right. The more the man beat him, the more he persisted in rearing and plunging, and holding back. There was another man along with the cart of a different temper. He went up to the horse, and patted him on the neck. He stroked his mane softly,

and spoke gently to him. The horse turned his head, and fixed his big eyes on the man, just as if he was trying to say, 'Why, my good fellow, I'll do anything in the world for *you*, because you speak kindly to me'. And then, bending his broad chest against the load, he turned the cart down the lane, and trotted along as briskly as though the load was only a plaything.

Politeness is one of the forms in which true meekness or gentleness shows itself. Now it costs very little to be polite, and it often pays very well. Some years ago there was a poor widow. She had an only son whose name was George. She was a Christian mother, and had taught her son the blessedness of meekness. He was a very gentle, polite little fellow, and very active too. One evening George's mother wanted to milk their cow. But the cow had a calf who did not like to see anyone getting the milk but itself, and would therefore make all the trouble it could while this operation was going on. So George's mother told him to catch the calf, and hold it by the ears till she had done milking. He did so ; and while he was thus engaged, a very wealthy gentleman in the neighbourhood was passing by. As he rode along, he said :—

'Good evening, my little man.'

'Good evening, sir,' said George, at the same time making a polite bow.

'But why didn't you pull off your hat, my son,' asked the gentleman, 'with such a polite bow?'

'Why, sir, you see I am holding the calf by the ears while mother milks the cow ; but if you will only have the kindness to come and hold her for me, I will take my hat off in a minute.'

The gentleman was so pleased with George's politeness, and the shrewdness of his reply, that not long after he came to see his mother. He said to her, 'My friend, your little George, is a smart boy, and if he is properly trained he'll make a great man some day. If you will allow me, I shall be glad to educate him, and give him a good start in the world.'

The mother thanked the gentleman for his kindness, and let him take charge of her son. And George rose from the ears of that calf to the highest rank as a lawyer ; he was sent to the Legislature, then to Congress, and finally he became the governor of the state. This was George M'Duffie, the Governor of South Carolina. George's polite bow made his fortune.

Everybody has heard of the Duke of Wellington. He was the greatest soldier Britain has had in this century. He defeated the great Napoleon Bonaparte at the battle of Waterloo. When this great warrior had done fighting, and had retired to private life, he was as meek and gentle as a little child. He always said, 'if you please,' when he asked for anything. He had been accustomed to command large armies, and to give orders that no one dared to disobey, and yet 'if you please' was constantly on his lips. It is said they were the last words he ever

spoke. There the great warrior, the 'Iron Duke,' as he was called, is on his death-bed. A faithful servant is attending him. He thinks the duke is thirsty. He pours out a little tea in a saucer and asks him if he will have a drink. 'Yes, if you please.' He never spoke again. All about him loved him because he was so meek and gentle. 'Blessed are the meek.'

III. The *third* way in which it is a blessing is, **By Doing Good to Others.**—This is one of the ways of doing good which we can all practise. There are some ways of doing good that only rich people can practise; but we cannot all be rich, and so we cannot all do good in those ways. There are other ways of doing good that only great people can practise; but we cannot all be great, and therefore we cannot all do good in those ways. But we can all try to be meek and gentle, kind and loving, in what we say and do; and so this is a way in which we can all be engaged in doing good. And it is one of the best ways of doing good.

See, there is a poor sick and wounded soldier. He has been taken from the battle-field, and put into an ambulance waggon to be carried to the hospital. But that hospital is a long way off, and it will take him some time to reach it. As soon as the waggon begins to move, it is found that the wheels are dry, and every time they move round they make a terrible creaking, grinding noise. The springs are broken under it too, and it goes jolting and jarring over the rough roads. Ah! how the harsh noise of the creaking wheels distresses the aching head of that poor soldier! And what terrible pain the jolting causes to his wounded limb! But presently a kind person comes along. He puts some oil on the wheels, and that stops their creaking. He has the broken springs taken off, and new ones put in their place, and now the poor soldier goes softly along, with no noise, and no jolting to trouble him.

And this is just the way in which a meek or gentle spirit is trying to do good to others all the time. It is always trying to stop the creaking and jolting that worry people as they are journeying on through this world.

If you wish to be really meek, and have the blessing that Jesus here speaks of, you must become Christians. You must learn to love Jesus, and be like Him. Sometimes we see persons who call themselves Christians, and are members of the church, who yet allow themselves to get angry, and give way to very bad tempers whenever anything is said to them which they don't like. What shall we say of such persons? There is only one thing to say of them: *They are not Christians!* The Bible says, 'If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His'. If we indulge in bad tempers, and allow ourselves to get angry, don't let us say that we don't mean any harm by it, and that it isn't very wrong. *It is very wrong.* It is dreadfully wicked. It shows that we are not Christians, and that we are not fit to go to heaven. We should be very sorry for these sinful

tempers. We should ask Jesus to forgive us, to take away all angry feelings from us, and make us meek and gentle as He is. Then we shall know what He meant when He said, 'Blessed are the meek'.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Blessings*, p. 119.

### THE PURE IN HEART

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'.—  
MATTHEW V. 8.

'BLESSED are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' But what does this mean? we know, when our dear Lord shall come again to judge the world, every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.

I. No doubt it especially means that the pure in heart shall have the nearest and dearest place to Him there.

II. But it means more. It means that they shall see Him even here. It means that the more anyone tries after that great grace of Christian modesty, the more, even in this world, they shall see how God it is Who rules all the changes and chances of their lives: the more they shall see Him in outward things; and in [their souls and hearts too, which shall be His dear Temples].

III. And then remember: all these Beatitudes are true the contrary way. If, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; then, Cursed are the impure in heart, for they shall *not* see God. That is: most especially, most particularly, most above all others, they shall be shut out from His sight, here and hereafter. If there is one sin above another which blinds our eyes, and deafens our ears, it is that of impurity. He, that spotless Lamb of God, Who condescended to have it said of Him that He cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils, never allowed one slightest suspicion of this sin to dwell on His infinitely glorious name.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children* (2nd edition), p. 92.

### THE WARNING AGAINST SWEARING

'Swear not'.—MATTHEW V. 34.

In handling this subject, I wish to speak of *three* good reasons why we ought to mind this warning.

I. **And the First Reason why we ought to Mind this Warning is 'Because Swearing is a Disgrace to Ourselves.'**—The greatest honour that anyone can have is 'the honour that cometh from God'. And if you ask how we are to get this honour? God gives us the answer Himself, when He says, 'Them that honour Me, I will honour'. And one of the best ways in which we can honour God, is by showing proper respect to His holy name. And when we do this, we may be sure that God will honour us.

But when we swear, and take God's holy name in vain, we dishonour Him. And then we may be sure that He will dishonour us, or cause disgrace to rest upon us. And we can have no greater disgrace than to know that God is displeased with us; and that the holy angels, and all the good people in heaven, are displeased with us. And yet we may be sure that



this is the case when we swear. It is a disgraceful thing to swear.

Here are two illustrations of this part of our subject. Our first story may be called, 'What a little girl thought of swearing'. A captain in the army had a month's leave of absence from the camp. He returned home to spend that holiday among the members of his family. While there he went to make a visit to an uncle who lived in the country, several miles distant from his home.

This uncle had a dear little girl, about ten years old, who loved the Saviour, and was trying to please Him in all things. She sat on her father's knee while he was talking with his nephew, the captain, and was very much distressed to hear how terribly he swore.

When he was going away, the little girl walked out with him towards the barn, where his horse was waiting for him.

As they were going there, she said to him, 'I don't like to hear you swear, cousin John, because swearing is such a disgraceful thing'.

'I know it's wrong, my dear,' he said, 'and I'm sorry I've got into the way of doing it.'

In the same gentle way, the little girl said, 'Well, then, if you know it is wrong, why do you do it?' Now this was a question much easier for her to ask than for him to answer. He felt it to be so, and did not attempt to answer it. But in speaking of it afterwards to a friend, he said, 'I never felt a reproof in all my life as I did the one given me by that little girl. I kept asking myself her question over and over again, "If I know it's wrong, why do I do it?" And then I made up my mind, that, by the help of God, I never would do so again. It is now a number of years since this took place. But from that day to this, I have never sworn another oath.'

That brave soldier was led to feel the truthfulness of the lines written by one of our English poets, who says:—

It chills my blood to hear the great Supreme,  
Lightly appealed to, on each trifling theme.  
Maintain your rank, vulgarity despise:  
To swear is neither brave, polite, nor wise.

Our next story may be called 'The minister's reproof'. A lieutenant in the English army had gotten into the habit of swearing fearfully. At one time he was stationed at Newcastle, England. While staying there, he got into a quarrel with some labouring men who were working for him on one of the public streets. They all got very much excited, and were swearing terribly. Just then, the clergyman of a Scotch Church in the neighbourhood was passing by. He was greatly shocked by the awful oaths which he heard. On looking round at the excited crowd, he saw among them one man whom he knew. Going up to him, he laid his hand on the man's shoulder, and said, 'Oh, John, John! what is this I hear? You are only a poor collier boy, and yet swearing at this terrible rate! What will become of you? Did you ever think what a disgraceful thing it is for you, or anyone, to take in vain the holy name of that great

God in whom we live, and move, and have our being?'

And then, turning to the lieutenant, who had been swearing as badly as any of them, he said, 'You'll please excuse this poor man, sir, for he is only an ignorant fellow, and does not know any better'.

We are not told what effect the minister's words had on poor John.

But the lieutenant felt them deeply. They made him feel very much ashamed of himself. The next day he called on the minister, and thanked him sincerely for the words that he had spoken.

'I never thought before,' said he, 'what a disgraceful thing it is for poor sinful creatures such as we are, to take in vain the name of the great God of heaven. But I see it now, sir, and I wish to tell you that I have sworn my last oath.'

And so the first reason why we ought to mind this warning against swearing, is because it is a disgrace to ourselves.

**II. And the Second Reason why we ought to Mind it, is 'Because it is an Injury to Others'.**—If we have a companion who sets us a bad example by constantly breaking one of God's commandments, he would be doing us a great injury by tempting us to commit the same sin that he was committing. If a person who had the small-pox, or the scarlet fever, should want to keep company with us, we can understand how much injury he would do us, because we should be likely to catch his disease from him. If a playmate of yours had the power of taking away from his companions the use of their limbs, and of making them lame; of taking away the use of their eyes, and of making them blind, we can easily understand how much injury such a person would do to his companions. But if we have among our playmates one who is in the habit of swearing, and taking God's holy name in vain, there is no telling how much injury he may do us. By his example, he may lead us to commit the same great sin that he is committing, and this would be a terrible injury. And we ought to mind this warning against swearing, because of the injury it will lead us to do to others.

Several years ago an officer of the navy was a passenger in one of the cars that runs from Jersey City to Trenton. He was engaged in earnest conversation with a gentleman who sat next to him, and accompanied what he had to say with terrible oaths. A young lady, who was an earnest Christian, was sitting so near him that she had to hear every oath he uttered. At first she tried to bear it patiently; but as the swearing continued, and grew louder and worse, she was very much distressed. She looked round for another seat, further away from the swearer. But every seat in the car was occupied, and it was impossible for her to get away.

Then she made up her mind to try and stop his swearing in some way. After thinking over it for a while, she turned to the officer, and said, 'Sir, can you speak in Hebrew?'

He was very much surprised by this question, and

after looking around him, in a confused sort of way, he answered the lady's question by saying, 'Well, I guess I could, if I tried.'

'Sir,' said the lady, 'it is very painful to me, and the other passengers, to hear the terrible oaths that you have been using. And if you swear any more, it will be a great relief to us if you will please do your swearing in Hebrew.'

The officer seemed thoroughly ashamed of himself. His face turned first red and then white. He looked first at the young lady, and then at the floor of the car, and then out of the window. But he stopped talking, and not another oath was heard from him, all the rest of the journey, either in English or in Hebrew. Here, we see how that officer was doing a real injury to all the passengers in that car by his swearing.

**III. But the Third Reason why we ought to Mind this warning is 'Because Swearing is an Offence to God'.—**Just think what it is that we are doing to God when we swear and take His holy name in vain. When the Israelites were coming out from Egypt, God met them at Mount Sinai. He came down on the top of that mountain, in the most solemn manner, and gave them in a voice of thunder His Ten Commandments. The third of these is the commandment against swearing. But when we swear, it is just as if we should take the leaf out of the Bible on which this commandment is printed, and should tear it in pieces, and trample it under our feet; and should say, while we were doing this, 'We don't care for God's commandments, and we are going to swear as much as we please'. What an offence to God that would be! There is something awful in the very thought of it. It would not surprise us, if the lightning from heaven should blaze forth against the person who did this, and consume him; or if the ground should cleave asunder beneath him, and swallow him up. Yet this is just what every swearer does. Surely, then, there can be no greater offence to God than that which swearing offers to Him.

Willie was a little boy about eight years old. His mother was a good Christian woman, and tried in every way to make him a Christian too. She had been particularly careful to teach him the Bible warning against lying and swearing. Willie loved his mother very much, and tried to remember and follow her teaching. He was generally very bright and happy. But one afternoon when he came home from school he looked very sad and unhappy. His mother said, 'Have you hurt yourself, Willie?' 'No,' was his reply. 'Have you been in any mischief?' 'No,' he said again. Still she wondered what could be the matter with her boy. At supper time he hardly ate a mouthful, and never spoke a word, though he was always in the habit of talking freely at meal-time. When supper was over, his mother said to him, 'Willie, my dear boy, do tell me what is the matter with you?'

'Oh, mother,' he said, 'on coming home from school this afternoon I swore. It was the first time I

ever did it. And the moment I had spoken the oath, and thought of the great offence I had committed against God, I felt frightened, and ran home as fast as I could. I would rather be dumb all the days of my life than to be a swearer. Mother, dear, won't you please kneel down with me, and ask God to forgive me for taking His name in vain?'

Then they knelt down together, and his mother asked God to forgive the great sin he had committed, and give him grace never to do so again. When they rose from their knees, Willie wiped away the tears from his face and said: 'Thank you, my dear mother. That was the first time I ever swore, and with the help of God I am sure it will be the last.' And so Willie learned the Bible warning against swearing, from seeing what an offence it was to God.

I have one other story to illustrate this part of our subject. We may call it, 'Struck dumb by swearing'.

The incident here referred to took place some years ago in the State of Indiana. The person to whom it relates was named John Lyman.

He had been a sailor for many years, and had learned to swear in the most terrible manner. On giving up going to sea he settled in Indiana. Here he had a company of half a dozen men in his employ, who used to go about the country, working under him in different ways. On one occasion they were employed in moving out all the contents of an old barn, and stowing them away in a new barn which had just been finished. While this work was going on something occurred that made Lyman very angry. Then he began to swear at a terrible rate. He kept on swearing worse and worse. It got to be so awful that the men stopped working, and put their hands to their ears that they might not hear any more of those dreadful oaths. While this was going on, all at once Lyman stopped speaking. Then he staggered and fell to the ground. He had suddenly lost the power of speech. He was unable to move. The men carried him to the farm-house. After awhile he rallied, so as to be able to move about as usual. But from that day to the day of his death he was never able to speak another word. What an offence his swearing must have been to God, when He punished him for it in this fearful way!—*RICHARD NEWTON, Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children, p. 334.*

## OUR FATHER

'Our Father which art in heaven.'—*MATTHEW VI. 9.*

I SUPPOSE that we all say this when we pray. Perhaps it is one of the earliest things that we learned to say. Let us be very thankful that we were ever taught to kneel down and pray to the Great God in heaven as our Father.

You know that it is more than eighteen hundred years since Jesus taught men to use these words. And yet only four hundred years ago the mothers in England were forbidden by law to teach their children the Lord's Prayer; for the priests wanted to keep the people as dark as possible, and only allowed

them to say the Paternoster, that is the Lord's Prayer in Latin. And then afterwards, though it was allowed, the people remained so dark that thousands of children were never taught these words. The venerable Mr. Thomas Jackson tells us in his *Life* then when he was a boy the people were so dark and foolish that they knelt and said a jumble of rhymes about

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.

So let us thank God that we have learned to say, *Our Father which art in heaven.*

But it is not enough to say it. You know when we pray it is not what our lips say that makes prayer, it is what our heart says. It is better, much better, to say a very poor stammering prayer that comes up from the heart, than it is to say even these sacred words if we do not think about them and mean them. I have heard a story of a little lad who was keeping his sheep one Sunday morning. The bells were ringing for the service at church, and the people were going over the fields, when this little fellow began to think that he too would like to pray to God. But what could he say? He had never learnt any prayer, yet he felt in his heart that he should like to ask the Heavenly Father for a blessing, and to help him to do right, and to keep the sheep. So he knelt down. Now it happened that a gentleman was passing on the other side of the hedge, and he heard a little lad's voice saying over the letters of the alphabet, A, B, C, D. He looked through the bushes, and there he saw this little fellow kneeling with folded hands and closed eyes, saying his A, B, C.

'What are you doing, my little man?' asked the gentleman kindly.

The little lad looked up, 'Please, Sir, I was praying'.

'But what are you saying your letters for?'

'Why, I don't know any prayer, only I felt in my heart that I wanted God to take care of me and help me, so I thought if I said all I knew He would put it together and spell what I wanted.'

'Bless your heart, my little man, He will, He will; when the heart speaks right the lips can't say wrong.'

The prayer that goes up to heaven must come from the heart. You know that in this old England years ago there were no guns, but the people shot with bows and arrows. Now if they put the arrow on the string only, and let it tumble off again, it would never shoot anything, would it? It was when they got hold of the string and pulled it back, back to the very breast, then away went the arrow and brought down the bird or the deer, or the wolf, or the foeman tall. So when our words just fall from the lips they go nowhere and do no good. But when our words go from our hearts they fly right up to heaven, and they bring down the blessings that we need.

Let us then think well of what this means—*Our Father which art in heaven.*

I. And first there is the word *our*. What a happy thing that we can all say it, and say it truly. All

can claim Him as *our* Father. I am so glad that everybody can kneel down and say this with me—*Our Father.*

One day when I was a very little boy, as far back as I can remember at all, I had been dressed up in some fine clothes—a sort of plaid suit—and sent with the others for a walk. It may have been in looking for something in the woods, or it may have been that I was foolish enough to think that a boy in such fine clothes was big enough to take care of himself, how it was I don't know, but somehow I got lost. I suspect that I should have been very much frightened, but I came upon a ragged lad who looked so hungry and wretched that I forgot all about myself, and as I looked at him the tears filled my eyes. He wondered at my looking at him so, and must have wondered more as I came up to him and said:—

'Poor boy! why haven't you any nice clothes to wear, like I have?'

He told me that his father was dead, and his mother was very ill and had nothing to eat, and he had come out to gather a few sticks to make a fire for her.

My heart was full enough before, now it ran over. I took hold of the ragged sleeve of his brown smock frock and cried, 'You must come home with me; you shall. And my father shall be your father and my home shall be your home, and we will send and make your mother better, and you shall have my clothes to wear.'

Home we went, for he was bigger than I and knew the way. Then up through the streets of the town, the people looking out of their houses wondering whatever I could be doing with this ragged lad. Straight home, and still holding on to the torn sleeve, I led him from room to room looking for my mother, and told her all the sad story. Ah, I remember well how he went away—how the sleeves of my dress came far above his wrists; how he carried a great basket of good things and promises of ever so much more. I was very glad—and yet it was not all that I wanted. I wanted him to have my father for his father, to have my father's love and care every day as I had. I just wanted him to say this, *Our Father*. Let us thank God that we all come to Him, and all have His love and care. Every one of us can call Him *our Father*.

*However little we are we may say Our Father.*

II. Then secondly, there is the word *Father*.

*God is our Father therefore He loves us.*

How much He loves us I cannot tell. We may think of His love for ever and ever, but can never find out how great it is. It is like those seas and lakes that they cannot find the bottom of, they are deeper than anything men have to measure them with. Paul thought about it as much as anyone and he says that it passeth knowledge. I should like you to think very often of what Jesus said: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

You remember the little child Moses, and the three



Hebrew young men who were cast into the fire; and the story of Daniel amongst the fierce lions, and how they did not harm him. One was a pillow for him, perhaps, and another a footstool. God did all these things. And He is our Father. Yours and mine. And because He is our Father too, He delights to take care of us. Do not think that all these wonderful things belonged to a wonderful age, and that there are no such wonders now. Things quite as wonderful are going on every day, through our Father's loving care.

III. Thirdly, God is our Father.

*Then we should honour Him.* You remember His commandment, the first commandment with promise. 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee'. And if we are thus to honour our earthly parents how much more should we honour our Father Who is in heaven? Let us always think of Him with reverence. The Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods, let us therefore give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. We are sinful and unworthy to come to Him at all. Let us always come to Him in the way He has taught us in His Word. Jesus said *No man cometh unto the Father but by Me*. We must come bringing with us the precious blood of Jesus as our sacrifice. Cain came to the Father bringing only the fruits of the earth, and his offering was not accepted. Abel brought with him the blood of the lamb, and with him God was well pleased. It pointed on to that Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world. He is the great, the holy, and the high, and He accepts of us only when we come to Him through Jesus Christ.

There is yet another thing that we must not forget. God is our Father, *then we must love Him*.

Love always wants love back again. It won't take anything else, it must have love. One day little Mary said to her mother: 'Mother, I love Jane so much, but I think Jane only likes me'.

'Why? Isn't she kind to you?' asked the mother.

'Oh, yes, mother, she is kind enough, and all that. But she is not glad when I come, like I am when she comes. She does not love me just like I love her.' Little Mary was just finding out what I have said, that love must have love back again.

We can never satisfy our Father in heaven with anything but our love. He loves us, and we must love Him. How do you think I should feel if I had a little child who was always very good and proper, always spoke very nicely and did what he was told, but did it all because he *ought*, and not because he loved me and tried to please me? I am sure that I should feel grieved, and say with little Mary, my love wants love back again.

You may sometimes see in old churches the image of a knight carved in stone. There he kneels, with his hands clasped, and his eyes shut, and looking so very good. But it is all cold and dead. There are

hands and eyes, but there is no heart in it. Many men and women pray like that stone knight. Indeed, you may find in the Bible where God sent one of the prophets to tell the people that they drew near to Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. Our Father wants our hearts. Try with all your might to think in everything—What will please our Father in heaven? In your play or in your work, at school or at home, in the business that you are learning, and in the friendships that you are forming, have this in your mind—let me please my Father in heaven. Ask Him to help you. Because He is the Father let us love Him with all our hearts.

And again, if God is our Father we must *obey Him*.

Be quite sure that He stands on His holy hill watching us with tenderest love, watching when it is wild and stormy. And by and by He too shall come to welcome us home to the Father's house.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 143.

### TRESPASSES

'Forgive us our trespasses.'—MATTHEW VI. 12.

WE often say these words, let us try this afternoon and see if we understand exactly what they mean. Sometimes I am afraid I say words without thinking of what we are saying, or trying to find out all they mean. Now, what are trespasses? Let us see.

Suppose we are taking a walk along a country road with hedges or fences on each side, and see all at once in a field on the other side of one hedge some beautiful wild flowers growing—or perhaps, if it is autumn, trees laden with nuts, and think we should like to climb over and get some. Just as we are going to climb over we see a board with this notice, 'Trespassers will be prosecuted'. What does that mean? Why it means that we mustn't cross over the hedge or fence, but keep to the road, or we may be prosecuted. And so, as we don't wish to get into trouble by doing wrong, we keep to the road.

Of course, if there were no fence or board we might be excused if we went astray, but as it is, it would be our own fault if we were punished.

You and I are walking on a road every day of our lives; the road of life, which leads from this world to the next. This road has a fence or a hedge on each side to keep us right; and there is a notice-board too, to tell us if we cross over we shall be punished. You know what these fences and these notice-boards are? Yes. God's commandments, and if we break them we commit a trespass or a sin, and so displease God.

Some of these fences or laws are, 'Thou shalt not steal,' 'Honour thy father and thy mother,' 'Thou shalt not bear false witness'.

Now when we kneel down at night to say our prayers, we should try and find out how we have trespassed, what sins we have committed, in thought, word, and deed, against God, and then ask Him to forgive them for Christ's sake.

And now let us see what we mean when we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses'. It doesn't mean we want Him to forgive us because we are afraid of being punished. No, if we meant that, it would be unworthy of us as God's children. Supposing you disobeyed your parents in any way, if you loved them you would feel sorry because you had displeased them; you would know they would be very grieved and sad because you had disobeyed them, and if you asked them to forgive you, that would be a sign of your sorrow. 'I am very sorry I have done this,' you would say, 'will you forgive me?'

You couldn't undo the past, but you could show you were sorry for it. So when we ask God, our Father in heaven, to forgive us our trespasses, that is one way of showing our sorrow that we have grieved Him.

It is a very easy thing to kneel down and say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' but it isn't so easy really to mean and feel what we say.

When you ask your parents to forgive you and say how sorry you are, and that you will try and do better for the future, they can't always tell whether you are in earnest, and may forgive you when perhaps you have no right to forgiveness. But it isn't so with God. He knows whether we are really in earnest. He can read our hearts, and sees where the words really come from; if only from our lips or from the bottom of our hearts.

And so when we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' we should try to be in earnest and ask God to make us truly sorry that we have grieved Him. We should try and remember how dreadful a thing sin is. Sometimes we forget what a serious thing it is to commit a trespass or sin. But look. See, there is Jesus Christ hanging on the cross. Why is He dying there? Ah! you know, it is to save us from our sins. Then, if it cost so much to redeem us and save us from sin, what a dreadful thing it must be in the sight of God. So when we ask God to forgive us our sins, let us try and feel really sorry that we have done that which grieves our Father in heaven.

But does this prayer only mean we are sorry because we have sinned against God? No, it means more than that—it means that we know God still loves us in spite of our sins and that He is always willing to forgive us.

There was once a father here in England who had a very bad son, who had done many things to bring sorrow and shame upon his family. At last, however, his father said to him, 'You are no longer a son of mine, you must leave this house; it shall never be your home again, for I will never forgive this last act of yours.'

The son went abroad for two or three years, and at last came to see how badly he had behaved to his friends, and a feeling of deep sorrow filled his heart. Yes, it was quite true; he had deserved all he had suffered, but he would go back and ask his father's forgiveness, and then perhaps the old home would open its doors for him again. So he wrote two

letters, one to his father and another to his sister, saying when he should be back in his native village, and asking her to meet him.

It was Christmas Eve when he reached the village, and as it was too late to do anything that night, he went to stay at an inn. As he lay awake listening to the bells chiming from the old church tower, to welcome the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, he thought they seemed to be sounding out a message of love and forgiveness for him. The next day he met his sister; but she had no good news for him; she brought no story of peace and goodwill from his father, such as the angels sang when Christ was born.

'Tell him,' this was the message from his father, 'tell him I will never forgive him'. And so whilst the church bells were once more pealing forth and inviting God's children to come and hear the story of their Father's love in sending Christ, His only Son, on earth to seek and save them, that young man turned away in sorrow from his home, because the old love had died out from his father's heart, and the prayer for forgiveness had been uttered in vain.

But we know that our Heavenly Father is always waiting to forgive us, His love never dies out, however much we sin against Him; and when we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' we are quite sure that our prayer will be answered if it is said in earnest. And so when night comes let us kneel down and confess our sins to God, and ask Him to pardon us for Christ's sake; we can then lie down to rest with a peaceful happy heart and say, My Father in heaven still loves me, and I will try and love Him more because He is so kind and good to me.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 37.

### THE FOWLS OF THE AIR

'Behold the fowls of the air,' etc.—MATTHEW VI. 26.

THE Lord Jesus was anxious that even the fowls of the air should not be overlooked. There is no danger of little boys or girls overlooking any pet fowl or bird which they own; but the fowls of the air, which are not owned by anyone, often remain unnoticed. Especially is this the case in wintry days, when their songs are not heard, and when poor songless birds remain perched upon the trees in the biting east wind or nipping frost, having given up all search for food, since the snow everywhere lies thickly on the ground. Our Lord would have little children think even of those birds which have little about them to win notice, as well as those which have rich plumage and sweet songs wherewith to win our favour.

Now Jesus, in His teaching, calls attention only to two birds in particular. But I imagine some little child saying, 'I should like to know the names of those birds. How beautiful they must be, and how sweet their song, for Jesus to pay them such honour!' No; He Who paid special attention to men and women who were neglected and despised by grander folk had an extra thoughtfulness for poor despised and neglected birds. (1) One bird specially mentioned by our Lord is the *raven*: 'Consider the

ravens' (Luke xii. 24). One strange fact about the raven was that it was the only bird of its particular order which the law of Moses pronounced unclean. Yet Jesus would have us consider that poor despised bird, and teaches us that *God feeds it*. Again, there has been a very general and ancient belief that the older ravens are very neglectful of their young, and that Job (see chap. xxxviii. 41) and the Psalmist (see Ps. cxlvii. 9) refer to God's tender care of the young ravens which are so cruelly neglected by their parents. Whatever may be said about that, we know that the ravens are not very charming birds. Like some people, whatever you do for them, all they can do is to *look very black and croak*. They are also great eaters, and have very voracious appetites. It takes a great deal to satisfy ravens. *Their* great danger is to die of hunger, since what would content other birds cannot satisfy them; yet '*God feedeth them*'. (2) Jesus speaks, too, of the *sparrow*. Now, the sparrows of Palestine, like ours, have nothing specially to recommend them—a grey coat and a shrill chirrup, that is all. *Their* danger consists chiefly in being caught in nets and sold for food. The raven was not in danger of this because it was unclean. But the sparrows are sold by thousands in the East, and very cheaply. Our Lord exclaimed, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?' (Matt. x. 29). And again, 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?' You see that in the second case the fifth sparrow was thrown into the bargain. Even the seller did not reckon the odd bird; but *our Father does*—'one of them' shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

Both the raven and the sparrow belong to an order of birds who have not the strength of the birds of prey, and who, on the other hand, have not the fixed food of other birds; yet 'your Heavenly Father feedeth them'. Notice He is the *God* of the raven and the sparrow, but *your Heavenly Father*. You have learnt of Jesus to call Him, 'Our Father, Who art in heaven'. Then you never need be anxious and doubt His care for you. How much dearer are you in His sight than the fowls!—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children* (1st Series), p. 41.

### THE SWALLOWS

'Behold the fowls of the air.'—MATTHEW VI. 26.

You know how our dear Lord often chose the things that we see around us, the fowls, the trees, the crops, the flowers, the birds, to teach us about Himself and about His kingdom. He left us an example that we should do as He did.

Now, then, let us see what we can learn from a swallow's nest, and from all that happened in it last year, in the early part, I mean, of the summer before this.

It was as lovely an evening in June as you ever saw: in one or two of the fields the hay had been cut, and was lying ready, after a day or two of sunny weather, to be carried. The cowslips were beginning to die off, the foxgloves were beginning to bud, the

trees were at their very greenest, the flowers at their very brightest. Everything showed how beautiful a summer can be.

In the eaves of an old, old farm-house, a swallow had built her nest of clay and earth; there she had brought up her five young ones; there they were fledged; and there they had grown up to nearly their full strength.

'It is a beautiful country, this where we are now living,' said the mother-bird; 'but you know we shall not live here always. The time will come when we shall have to cross the wide, wide sea, before we can settle down in what is really our home.'

'But why can we not stay here always?' asked one of the little ones.

'Because,' answered the mother, 'the time will come when all these trees that now look so beautiful will lose their leaves; the days will grow very short and cold; all the ground will become as hard as stone, and there will be no worms to pick out of the beds, or flies to catch in the air. You cannot guess from what you have seen in your little lives, what a miserably cold, dark time winter is. You cannot tell what it will be when all the water turns into ice, and the ground is covered with snow, and men light up great fires in their houses, and, when they go out, go out wrapped as warmly as they can; and when a great many of the poor birds who live here all the year are starved or frozen to death.'

All the little brood of birds began to look very grave, and to ask all manner of questions at once.

'How long will it be before we have to go?' said one.

'How long will it take us to get there?' asked another.

'What kind of a country is it that we have to go to?' inquired a third.

'Can none of us stay here?' asked a fourth.

'I cannot tell you,' said the mother, 'the exact time when we shall have to leave this land. That must depend on the weather; whether the wind is warm and the sky is unclouded, or whether the wind comes from the north, and the thick black clouds shut out the sun altogether. It may be ten days sooner or later: but some time in the autumn, when the leaves begin to turn yellow, and to fall from the trees, when the acorns begin to drop from the oak, and the hawthorn berries are quite ripe, then we shall have to go.'

'And how long will it take us to go?'

'That, too, depends on how the wind blows, and on what the weather is. But we shall have to fly day and night; not over land like this, where we could rest if we are tired, but over the great water men call the sea, for a day and a night, and perhaps part of another day, before we can come to our real home. You think these trees and flowers very beautiful; and so they are; but what will you say when you see the great trees and the bright flowers of that country! the tall palms that tower up far above the oaks and elms here, and the sweet fruits, the guavas and the bananas, and the custard apples, that are in that



land. But now you see why it is I am so anxious for you to strengthen your wings, and to try how far and how fast you can fly; why I do not like your loitering in this nest, but would have you, day by day, go farther and farther from it. For, depend upon it, it is as much as any of us can do to cross that sea at last, and when we do come to the other side, some of us are more dead than alive, and though we have reached it, it required all our strength to get there, and we were all but exhausted by the journey.'

Well, as you may easily think, the little birds for some time thought and talked a good deal about what their mother had told them. They often wondered, as the long, long days of summer came on, how there could be any country more beautiful than this. When they had tried their wings for a longer time than usual and felt tired, they were sometimes afraid that their strength would never hold out; and they would sometimes try to fancy that unknown land; what it was, what kind of creatures lived there, and what trees they could be that were so much more beautiful than these. But as July came on, and the weather grew warmer and warmer, one or two of them (foolish little birds) began to doubt whether it could be as their mother said. 'She talked,' said one, 'of the air getting cold, and the days becoming shorter. I am sure that it is a great deal warmer than it was when she spoke to us.'

'I do think,' said one of the others, 'that the days are a little shorter.'

'I don't see that,' said the first, 'but I am quite sure that it is hotter.'

'However that may be,' said the youngest, whom we may call Tiny, 'I believe what our mother said; and I try every day harder and harder to prepare myself for our journey.'

'You, Tiny!' cried the others, 'such a poor little weak thing as you, you will never be able to pass that great sea, whoever else can!'

'I will do my best,' said Tiny, 'and I hope after all to see that beautiful country, some day, of which my mother is so fond.'

July passed away, and still the hot weather continued, and though the days did shorten a little it was nothing to speak of. But as August went on the little birds were astonished to see some of the leaves, as those on the willow, turning yellow. And though the days were very hot there was a chilliness in the evenings, and a heaviness in the dew that they had never known before. And towards the end of August the sun began to set very much sooner; and they could almost see a difference in his time of setting every evening. And now sometimes the old birds began to hold a council which the young ones were not allowed to attend; and at last the mother of our little brood told them that it would not be so very long before they had to leave this land.

All of them felt very uncomfortable, and they began to feel sadder and sadder, when the next two or three days were darker and wetter than any they had yet seen.

The eldest of the whole brood had been the most backward in trying its strength. Its mother had often warned it that unless it would practise now, it never would have any chance of crossing the sea. But for all that it had led a sadly idle life, only exercising itself just as much as it was necessary to get a living, and then resting. The one next to it, the strongest of the whole brood, delighted in proving its strength, but never could believe the stories of the long nights and the cold days which the old birds told.

At last all the trees began to turn yellow, the leaves fell from the walnut and the lime and the willow; every rough breeze swept down hundreds of beech-nuts, and chestnuts; the wheat-sheaves were long ago safely housed in the barns; and the days and nights were nearly equal. One fine evening the mother of these little birds called them together again, and said: 'In a very few hours the time will come that is fixed for our departure. When once we have left the land, I shall be able to do nothing more to help you till we reach that other country. You will have to take care of yourselves. Only keep as near as you can to me; or if you are separated from me, then keep close to the band of swallows with whom we shall go: else you will miss your way, and never reach the beautiful country that I have so often told you of. In the meantime you must keep close to the nest, that whenever the notice is given, we may all be ready to obey it.'

Two evenings after this, about an hour before sun-setting, an old and very swift swallow went flying round to all the eaves of the farms and old houses near, and appointed them to meet on a certain hill (one of that range of hills that we see when looking to the south), and by the spire of the church there at sunset. So they took their last meal, and by the time appointed were on the wing; but with very different feelings. The eldest bird, who had never exercised himself, began to doubt whether he could ever bear the fatigue: the second would rather have stayed in his own familiar woods, and skinned round the old, well-known buildings; Tiny, a weak little bird, after all, was terribly afraid of the distance, but resolved to do her best.

As the sun set, they met by hundreds and hundreds round the spire. Presently the signal was given, and all the birds set off for the south. And as they passed many and many a little village, they were joined by fresh hosts of birds; so that when they first came in sight of the sea, instead of hundreds they might have been reckoned by tens of thousands.

When they first came in sight of the sea! Ah, then it was that the courage of the eldest bird utterly failed. When he saw nothing before him but the broad, broad water, and found that the army of his companions were still winging their way towards it, he resolved to take his chance and remain behind.

There was no time for a long consultation then. The season of preparation and advice was over. Those that were ready must make the effort at once;

those that were not ready had now no hope. It was in vain that his mother, and the rest of his little family, tried to urge him on; stay he would, and stay he did. There were a few sunny days in which he could still enjoy himself in his old haunts. But then came clouds thicker, and rain heavier than ever. Three or four weeks of misery: the recollection of his companions now safely at home in that sunny and beautiful country; and then one night of sharp frost put an end for ever to the sufferings and sorrows of the poor bird.

But as for the rest. As they passed over France, still fresh and fresh hundreds joined themselves to the huge army. And when they were fairly over the Atlantic Ocean, swiftly as they flew, and wide as they stretched out, it took half an hour for the whole body to pass any one spot. All that night, and all the next day, they went southward, southward still; but towards the evening, just as the sun was about to sink into the purple ocean (oh, how purple it is out there, at such a distance from land!) Tiny, who had all this while kept close to her mother, said that her strength was failing. The poor mother tried to comfort and support her as well as she could; but they flew slower and slower; and the great multitudes of birds were passing before them. At last, just as Tiny's strength was about to fail, far below them they beheld a ship.

'I will keep with you my child,' said the mother; 'it is not the first time I have rested on the houses which men build upon the seas.'

And in another minute they were resting on its mast. The sailors, as they always do, strewed bread-crumbs on the deck, left a wide space for the weary birds, and did everything they could to make them welcome. So they ate and were refreshed: while all that night the ship was bearing them towards the land whither they were going.

And a stormy night it was: and among the hundreds that perished in the tempest was that one of our little birds, who had most trusted in his strength, and had feared nothing at first setting forth.

The rest of a night and a fine morning sent forth our two birds, Tiny and her mother, on their way, and brought them to their home.

And now you have seen the lesson that they teach us. We, like them, belong to a better country than this: we, like them, but for our own fault, shall return thither: we know not the exact time, but we know that there is a certain time beyond which we cannot linger. The ocean, across which none, save God Himself, can help us, is death. And so the next time you see those swallows preparing, as you may see them now, for their autumn journey, think whether you are preparing for yours. You have every help now which can assist you in your preparation. God grant you so to use them that when the time shall come, however terrible that passage must be to every one, it may, nevertheless, be safe to you, and blessed, beyond the power of words to speak, in

its ending!—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children* (2nd edition), p. 215.

### GOD'S CARE FOR THE BIRDS

MATTHEW VI. 26.

TO-DAY I have been out among the green lanes, and there I saw some wonderful proofs of God's care of birds. You will think it strange, yet it is true, there are people who do not think God has care for His creatures. But I think everything about us speaks of His care, not for man alone, but for the animal world.

The hedges are covered with red berries and black; the bright red clusters of the mountain-ash, the elder-berries, the great red pods of the dog-rose, the small dark-red berries of the hawthorn, and the black-berries, they are plentiful on every thicket and wild-growing hedge. Now, I have been noticing one thing in these fruits. First, there are hardy ones, like the berries of the mountain-ash and the hawthorn, which will remain ripe on the trees for many weeks. But there are others which are not hardy, like blackberries, which must be gathered when they are ripe. These do not all ripen at once, but gradually, twig by twig, branch by branch, as the sun reaches in to them; so that they will go on ripening and giving newly-ripened berries for weeks to come. Now it appears to me as if our Lord must have been thinking of something like this when He spoke of how God cared for birds. These hedges are God's table for the birds for bleak winter months. From April till June He feeds some of them with caterpillars and grubs, and others with other things; from June till August they have seeds of a thousand kinds, and because they are in one sense our fellow-creatures, and also our fellow-workers in our orchards and harvest-fields, we give them a share of our corn and barley and fruit. But, when these are all cleared away, God spreads a new table for them, covers the hedgerows with clusters of beautiful berries, which hang through the winter. Such is provision for some birds. For other kinds of birds He has other winter stores. These other birds I have often seen in a certain week in late autumn gathering in flocks and settling on the roof of a church, and when the entire flock was gathered the whole multitude of it spread their wings, rose up and up, higher and higher, flew away and away into a warmer land, where God had taught them to go; where He had prepared stores of new grubs, new seeds, new berries for them. And so they went year by year. Such is God's care for the birds.

Now, God has more care of you; He has furnished a far better feast for you; to you Jesus has been given to be your Bread of Life. 'Are you not much better than they?'

It is beautiful to think how God cares for the sparrows. It is still more beautiful to think how much more He cares for you.

Sometimes in Italy the people meet to have a great holiday. They call that holiday the 'Carnival'. The streets are filled with people. In the windows

of the houses people sit with baskets of flowers and sweets, which they throw at the people in the streets. From all the villages round about at one of these carnivals the people went into the city; but one peasant boy preferred to be at home—a bright-eyed boy. He remained at home to play with his pet sparrow. And when everybody else was gone away, he took out the cage of his pet, opened the door, took the sparrow on the forefinger of his one hand and fed it with the other. They had a happy time together. Brightly shone the little bird's eye; loudly it chirped its song of thanks to its dear friend and master. The boy told his love to the bird; the bird trilled back its love to the boy. But something was going wrong; the air grew black, and then arose near and far an awful sound. The earth began to heave, the houses to fall, the houses of the rich and the houses of the poor—and the cattle were filled with terror. It was an earthquake.

The boy, thinking of his sparrow, fastened it up in its cage and hung the cage on its peg. But the earth heaved under the poor boy's house and the house was shaken to pieces, and walls and roofs fell down. And the boy was caught in the falling ruins and buried (his brother also; his brother flung his arms about his neck, and thus they died, and in the ruins they were buried), and all that was visible of the boy that had been so happy with his little bird in the morning was his hand. His hand rose up out of the ruins. And then came other shocks of the earthquake, and one of these unlatched the door of the cage, and the little bird flew out. Where did it fly to? To the hand of its dear young master—to the hand on which it had perched in the morning.

The living bird, the dead boy, the ruined cottage, the heaving earth; but God, our God, is over all, good and strong and blessed for ever.

I am only a little sparrow,  
A bird of low degree;  
My life is of little value,  
But the Lord doth care for me.

I have no barn or storehouse,  
I neither sow nor reap;  
God gives me a sparrow's portion,  
But never a seed to keep.

If my meal is sometimes scanty,  
Close picking makes it sweet;  
I have always enough to feed me,  
And life is more than meat.

I know there are many sparrows;  
All over the world we're found:  
But our Heavenly Father knoweth  
When one of us falls to the ground.

Though small, we are never forgotten;  
Though weak, we are never afraid;  
For we know that the dear Lord keepeth  
The life of the creatures He made.

And God had some good reason for letting the sparrow's little master be buried in the ruins.

He was taking him from evil to come. He was taking him where he would be for ever safe from sin.

It is still a great mystery. But one thing is clear. You see God cares for the sparrow, and the Lord says, 'He will much more care for you'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 63.

## FLOWERS

'Consider the lilies of the field.'—MATTHEW VI. 28.

OUR Lord took for His text one day the flowers which grew in their brightness and beauty, the bright red lilies which dotted the fields of Galilee, and so I would do to-day. As you look at these lovely flowers which you have here presented as an offering, and of which some will be distributed to poor sick children in the hospitals by gentle and loving hands, 'consider them, how they grow'. I would ask you to consider three things about flowers and their growth. I. How quietly they grow. II. How innocent they are. III. How useful they are.

I. We often think that noise means power. The thunder, as it rolls and echoes along a mountain-side; the storm, as it tears and rages through a forest; the cataract, as it descends in foam and spray; or the deafening clang of the machinery in some great factory—these things seem to be strong and powerful. But the forces of Nature, which work without noise or noise, are quite as mighty and effective. Through some calm winter night the snow will fall so silently that it disturbs not the lightest sleeper, and each little flake is so tender that a touch destroys it; and yet the vast snow-drifts defy all your efforts to remove them, and the great engine, which seems to rush on the line with irresistible power, stands defeated by the silent snow. Or, year after year, with no noise whatever, the tree grows up from an acorn to be a mighty giant of the forest, and the silently formed oak resists the great storms which beat upon it. So it is that the strongest things and the loveliest things grow silently. All these beautiful flowers, and all these ripe fruits—so lovely, so useful, they have all grown in silence.

It is just so with our lives. You tender plants in the garden of God, your lives ought to grow up with all lovely flowers of virtues, and with all useful fruits, quietly and silently. You must not always be making a great fuss about every little deed of kindness you do, and every little piece of work you accomplish, and every kind and loving word you speak. Noise, does not mean growth and progress. God sees everything; but I am sure He looks with most approving love on those things which make least noise. It does not matter in the least whether other people see and admire them. God knows all your silent prayers, all your silent deeds of tenderness and love.

A gentleman was walking late one night along a street in London, in which stands the hospital where some of our little friends support a bed<sup>1</sup> for a sick child. There were three acrobats passing along there plodding wearily home to their miserable lodgings

<sup>1</sup> 'The Mayfair Cot,' in Ormond Street Hospital, is supported by the children of Berkeley Chapel congregation.



after their day's work ; two of them were men, and they were carrying the ladders and poles with which they give their performance in the streets whenever they can collect a crowd to look on. The third was a little boy in a clown's dress. He trotted on wearily behind, very tired, and looking pale and sick.

Just as they were passing the hospital, the little lad's sad face brightened for a moment. He ran up the steps, and dropped into the box attached to the door a little bit of paper. It was found next morning there. It contained a sixpence, and on the paper was written, 'For a sick child'. The one who saw it afterwards ascertained, as he tells us, that the poor little waif, almost destitute, had been sick, and in his weary pilgrimage was a year before brought to the hospital, which had been a 'House Beautiful' to him, and he was there cured of his bodily disease. Hands of kindness had ministered to him, words of kindness had been spoken to him, and he had left it cured in body and whole in heart. Some one on that day in a crowd had slipped a sixpence into his hand, and that same night, as he passed by, his grateful little heart gave up for other child sufferers 'all the living that he had'. It was all done so quietly, so noiselessly ; but, oh ! believe me, the sound of that little coin falling into God's treasury that night rose above the roar and din of this mighty city, and was heard with joy in the very presence of God Himself.

II. How innocent and pure the flowers are. Can you imagine a flower making any one have an evil thought, or exciting in any one a bad passion ? Why, the lily, for example, is almost another name for Purity and Innocence. Keep your hearts innocent as long as you can ; be pure in thought, in deed, in word. That seems to be the lesson which those pale-lipped evangelists, the lilies, would teach you. Keep out of your hearts all envious, proud, unkind thoughts. Keep your lips unsoiled by any hard, passionate, spiteful, false, or cruel words. Let your deeds be tender, brave, and true. Grow as noiselessly and quietly as the flowers grow up to their innocence and purity.

The illustrious Queen Caroline Mathilda, of Denmark, was one day tempted to commit a great sin, and she wrote on her castle window with a diamond, so that the words might be constantly present to her as words of prayer, 'O God ! keep me innocent. If Thou wilt, make others great.' What a blessed day this might be in your memories for ever and ever, if you resolved that this night, and every morning and night while you live on earth, you would pray these simple words, pray this from your heart of hearts, 'O God ! keep me innocent'. Do make that resolve to-day.

III. Flowers are not only beautiful and innocent, they are useful also.

What can be more useful work than that of a teacher ? Are not the flowers teachers ? Have they not been preaching to us to-day, giving us lessons of life and duty ? I remember a poor old sick woman once said to me, as she pointed to a little bunch of

violets in a glass by her bed, 'Them flowers, sir, preach to me so beautifully'. You who have fine gardens in the country, and even here in town have your houses filled with flowers, can scarcely understand what a rare blessing flowers are to the poor people who live in the dark and crowded streets of our city. Children have grown up to be almost men and women without seeing a flower ; and so when they get a flower they value it much, and its beauty and its perfume seem to teach them lessons of purity and love.—T. TRIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 41.

### CLEAR THE LINE !

'Seek ye first.'—MATTHEW VI. 33.

WE are all born explorers ; there is nothing we like better when we are little than to seek, and seek, and rummage about and find new places and things. Whether it is an old cupboard, or a crooked street, or a bit of a wood on the fringe of a meadow, there is a thrill of pleasure in exploring it and finding out all about it, such as we never have after discovering all that is there.

I suppose that is why every healthy boy and girl likes books of adventures and tales of travel. Oh, to have been with Columbus when first he looked on the New World ! Oh, to have stood beside Magellan when his ship first glided into the silent, mighty Pacific Ocean ! But it's no use wishing ; it is very nice, but it doesn't bring us any nearer. All the same we love to hear and read of the men who were the first to do things and the first to see them, and we can't help wishing for what we love, can we ?

As we said, there is a bit of the explorer in us all. We like to find out, and if we are the first to find out, so much the better. And it is well that it should be so, for there isn't anything worth having but needs to be sought out, and hunted up, and asked and asked for again. That's why you are always asking 'Why?' You were made to do it. You see, this is a big world, with a great many things in it, and you never saw them before or knew they were there, and so you must ask Why ? Why ? Why ? if you are ever to find out and learn. It is a good thing, then, of itself, to have the seeking spirit.

But everything depends on how we use it, if it is to do us any good. The boy who goes seeking for blackberries, when he has been sent to seek for his little brother who has wandered away, will have a very bad quarter of an hour after he gets home. No harm, but much good, in seeking for blackberries ; but much harm and no good in seeking for them when we should have been seeking for something else. And it is the same about everything ; what we are doing may be right enough in itself, but it may be all wrong because we are doing it at the wrong time. There is a first and a second and a third, and very many more after these, and if we put the third second, or the second first, we have turned things the wrong way about, and are certain to suffer for it ourselves, and to make others suffer too.

What, then, is the first thing we should seek? Most people say, *Money!* Oh, to be rich! to be able to buy things, and roll about in a carriage, and live in a big house, and have tarts every day! Let me tell you a tale by a great poet.

There was a poor Roman scholar once, who was very clever and gave promise of doing much good in the world. One day he saw a strange statue with curious writing carved upon it. He could read and understand the writing, and it made him watch the shadow which the statue cast on the ground, and this led him to discover his way into a hall that was stored with riches—silver and gold and precious gems. What a quantity he gathered together! What dreams he had of the great mansion he would build and the grand things he would do! Just as he turned to go, however, he saw at his feet a wonderful green stone, and he stooped to lift it, for it was worth the price of a kingdom. But the stone was fixed to the ground, and as he struggled to loosen it he saw the figure of a knight in armour that stood near slowly lift his bow and draw the arrow on the string. The arrow struck the great jewel by which the hall was lighted, and in an instant all was dark. It was in vain the scholar groped and groped to find the door by which he had entered; he could not come by it, and so perished miserably in the dark by the side of all the treasure he had gathered together.

That is an interesting story, is it not? But what does it mean? Just this: the riches are dear, dear, however abundant they may be, that are got at the cost of all that makes the light of life for us. They never, never should be the first.

And so there are many other things that people put first, only to find—perhaps when too late—that they should have been second, or third, or even farther down.

Jesus leaves us in no mistake. He speaks the right, clear, bold word we all need when He says, 'Seek ye first!—what? *The kingdom of God and His righteousness.* That means—make it your first concern about everything to be right with God.

That fits everybody. There are some things we may never hope to be able to do: they may be too great, or too wise, or too difficult for us, or they may take too long a time, or more strength than we shall ever have. But—to be right with God!—we can all seek this, and seek successfully, too. How? By trying to live up to Jesus. He is like the top line of the copy-book, and as we imitate that, we come by and by to write like it. He is the Friend, and as we keep close by Him we come to speak as He speaks, and do as he does, and be as He is. What is more—He is the Helper, and when we have done wrong He can put us right. To believe in Him, to love Him and strive to be like Him—that is the first thing every one of us has to do.

I had a dream once: many have had a similar one with the eyes open. And I saw a great many people standing before God. They were telling about all they had done. One had been a king, and had built

vast palaces; another had been a soldier, and had conquered in many a battle; another had been a merchant, and had employed thousands of people; and so on. But one question was asked them: 'Did you do the first thing?' One by one they hung their heads—and when I looked again they had vanished away, and there was only the sound of sobbing in the air.

Then set your hearts on seeking Jesus and pleading Him as the first thing of everything you have to do. Everything else you want and everything else you need He promises to send, and send in the right time and way, as you keep doing this. It is a promise, and Jesus never breaks His promises. Trust Him.

When the King has an important message to telegraph everything else has to be set aside. 'Clear the line!' is the word that is then passed on, and till the royal message has been sent no other can be despatched.

That is the way this message from Jesus is sent to us. It comes saying, 'Clear the line!' Everything else—books, play, work—must be second or third or fourth. 'Seek ye first!—' that is the command, and till we have obeyed it we have not even begun to be right with God.

So begin now—at once. When it is a matter of life and death (as this is) of obeying God or disobeying Him, there is need that we should promptly 'Clear the line!' and hearken and do. Seek first—seek first—Jesus. 'They that seek shall find.'—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 5.

#### ON PUTTING THE RIGHT THING FIRST

'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'—MATTHEW VI. 33.

It is a great thing in a child's life to know the first thing to seek after. It is greater still, when that is known, to seek that first thing first.

What most people do is to seek some second thing first, and the first thing second, or not at all.

Now there are just two things in life which people seek after. These are right things and nice things. And of these two, the first to seek after is the right thing; the second is the nice or pleasant thing.

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord, speaking of those two things, says—Seek the right thing first, and the pleasant things will come after. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things,' all pleasant things, things like food and clothing, shall be 'added unto you.' It is the same as if He had said, Seek first what ye ought to seek, and God will send you what you would like to get. The right things, the things of God, and of heaven, and of the soul, first; the pleasant things, the things of the world, of earth, and of the body, next. God, religion, duty, first; honour, health, happiness, next.

I. The great King Solomon began life by seeking the best things first. He had sought knowledge and wisdom from the Prophet Nathan when a boy. And when he was made king, hardly out of his boyhood, he began his reign by seeking the help

of God. One of his first acts as a king was to take his great captains, judges, and counsellors up to the hill Gibeon, to ask this help from God.

It must have been a great sight, the beautiful young king in his royal robes, the soldiers in their armour, the counsellors and judges in their robes of honour, as they went up the sides of the hill to the place of prayer. Priests were there with sheep and oxen for the sacrifice. There still was the old tent which had gone with the people in all their wanderings. There also was the brazen altar which Bezaleel had made for Moses long before in the wilderness. The air was filled with the clang of trumpets as the king and his mighty men went up. Then rose from the brazen altar the smoke of the sacrifices. 'A thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.' A beautiful sight! But the beautiful thing at the heart of it all was this—that it was a young king beginning his life as a king by seeking the best things first.

On the night which followed that day of prayer, Solomon was asleep in Gibeon. And God came to him in a dream and said, 'Ask what I shall give thee'. And even in the dream of the night, the heart of the young king went out towards the best things. He remembered that the kingdom he was called to rule over was a great kingdom, and he was still a mere lad. So he said, 'I am but a little child, yet, O Lord. I know not how to go out, or come in. And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered, nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great people?'

Now that was the right thing to seek. It was therefore the best thing. And Solomon sought that best thing first and received it. And God 'added' the pleasant things. He gave him riches, and honour, and long life besides. 'Because thou hast asked this thing—this best, right thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, or riches, or the life of thine enemies, behold . . . I have also given thee what thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.' It happened to him just as our Lord says: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things, food and clothing, and a happy life, and honour, shall be added unto you'.

II. Now Solomon had a brother who took the other plan. It was his brother Absalom. He was an elder brother, but not a wiser brother. This brother put the pleasant thing, the thing he would like, first. And he put the right thing second.

The thing he thought pleasant, and put first, was to be king on his father's throne. He kept saying to himself, 'Oh, if I were only king!' He was a very beautiful man. And it was part of his beauty that he had a fine head of long and curly hair. And

he was proud of this hair, and sometimes would dress it, and show himself to the people. At last he thought his hair would help him to become king. So one day he dressed it, and put on his princely robes, and sat at one of the gates of Jerusalem, and as the people went out and in, he kept saying, 'If I were king things should go better with you all'.

Now that was a very pleasant thing to wish for, to be king. But just then, and for Absalom, it was not a right thing. For his father David was still living. And he was still king. And the right thing for Absalom, his son, was to honour and obey his father, so long as that father lived. But he did not honour his father. He wished his father dead and away. His one wish, the wish he put first among all the wishes of his heart, was to be king in his father's place. Often he would look at himself in a mirror and say, 'What a splendid figure I shall make seated on the throne!' And he thought day and night about it. And he wished this evil wish. And to those who would listen to him, he talked about it. Although he never prayed to God, he began to pray to the people. As they came in by the gates of the city, he said, 'Dear people, make me your king'.

Some of the people were foolish and wicked, and listened to his prayer. And they joined together to drive the old King David away from the kingdom, and put beautiful young Absalom on the throne. And Absalom and his people got swords and spears, and began to fight. They got together a great army to drive out David. And David was driven from his home and from Jerusalem, and had to flee beyond Jordan.

But when this had gone on for a short while, some of the people who still loved David, and thought that right things should go before pleasant things, came together with swords and spears also, to fight against the army of Absalom. And there was a great battle in the forest of Ephraim. Absalom was there amongst his fighting men on the battle-field. But as he rode about on his royal mule he was separated from his own soldiers, and met those of his father. And he was afraid, and turned and fled back into the wood to hide himself until they passed. But as he rode, his beautiful hair was caught in one of the branches of a tree. And his affrighted mule rode on from under him. And he was left hanging between the branches and the ground. The hair he was so proud of held him fast, till his father's soldiers closed round about him, and put him to death. Then they threw him into a ditch and covered him with stones.

That was the end of Absalom. He put the pleasant thing first, and the right thing last. And he lost all—everything he had liked and worshipped, and sought after—his beautiful hair, the face he had so often looked at in the mirror, his place among the princes of Israel, his honour and character as a son, and at last life itself.

III. This has always been God's way. In all ages and to all sorts of men, those who have put the right things first have been blessed by Him: those who have put the pleasant things first have been troubled.



The Prophet Daniel was a man who put the right things first. He loved God. He loved praying to God. Three times a day, with his windows open towards Jerusalem, where God's temple was, he cried to God in prayer. But the wicked men of Babylon hated this praying to God. And they hated Daniel because he prayed to God. So they got the king to say that for thirty days everybody was to pray to him and to him only, and every one who prayed to God, as Daniel did, should be cast into a den of lions. What Daniel had to choose between, therefore, was this right thing—praying to God, and this pleasant thing—saving himself from being cast into the den of lions.

I am sure life was as sweet to Daniel as it is to you and me. It could never be a pleasant thing to be cast into a den of lions. And he might have said, 'Tis only for thirty days'. But then, there was nothing wrong in being cast among the lions. And it would have been quite wrong, even for thirty days, to have stopped praying to God, or to have prayed to the king instead of God. The right thing to do was to keep on praying to God; the pleasant thing, to keep from being thrown to the lions. But when the two came together, and he had to put one of the two first, he put the right thing first. He kept on praying to God.

Now it was not Daniel only who had to make this choice. The bad men who got the king to pass the wicked law, they also had a choice to make. It was a pleasant thing for them to get Daniel thrown to the lions. It is always pleasant for bad men to get good men out of their way. But although it was pleasant, it was wrong. And it was very wrong. The right thing was to have left Daniel free to pray to his God. The right thing would have been to have said, 'O king, do not pass such a cruel law as that'. But they put the pleasant thing, which was also a cruel, wicked thing, first. And from the right they hid their eyes entirely.

See now how differently God dealt with Daniel and with them.

Daniel had put the right thing first. He had said, 'I dare not stop praying to God'. And God did not forsake him when he was cast into the lions' den. All that night, all through the black hours, beside those hungry lions, face to face with their sleepless eyes, God, unseen, stood by His servant and shut their mouths.

But when the men who had put, not the right thing, not God's honour and law, first, but their own wicked and cruel pleasure, when they came next day and were thrown, because of their wickedness in Daniel's stead, among the lions, God let the fierce beasts open their mouths to destroy them. In a moment the 'lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den'.

IV. This is still God's way; His law never changes. Although twenty-four hundred years have passed since he saved Daniel, He still puts a blessing on

all who like Daniel put the right thing first, and He refuses to bless those who put the pleasant thing first.

About thirty years ago there was a famous master at one of our universities who used to give a gold medal every year to the student who wrote the best essay on 'Truth'. And year by year the name of the student who gained the medal was set up in letters of gold on the walls of that master's class-room. One year there came up from the country a young lad who wanted greatly to have his name on these walls in letters of gold. And he set his heart on winning the gold medal for the essay on 'Truth'. As he was pacing to and fro in the corridors of the university one day, thinking what fine things he could put into his essay, the author of an essay which gained the medal some previous year went past. And in a moment it flashed into the young student's mind, that if he could get this essay to read, he might find out from it what sort of essay was likely to win the prize. So he went to the author and borrowed the essay which had won the prize. But when he read the essay he saw that it was far beyond anything he could think or write. And the evil thought came into his soul to copy it from beginning to end, and send it in as his own. It would be so pleasant to get the prize. It would be so pleasant to have his name printed up on the walls in letters of gold. It would be so pleasant when he went back to the country to have the neighbours and his old schoolfellows saying, 'That is the man who got the medal of gold for the essay on "Truth"'. And he did that very thing. He put all thought of what was right out of his soul. He thought only of what was pleasant. He bent the whole force of his mind to seek his own pleasure. He neither sought righteousness, nor fairness to others, nor truth, nor honesty, nor God. He sat down and copied out the whole of the borrowed essay, word by word, and put his own name on the back of it, and sent it in to the master as his own.

The master read the essay, and said, 'This is the best essay of the year; it deserves the prize'. But, although he said that, some words in the essay kept coming back to him, as if he had somewhere or other seen them before. And by and by, the whole essay came back to his memory, and he found out that it was the essay which had won the medal two years before.

The Bible says, 'Shame is the promotion of fools'. Instead of glory, this foolish lad was to have shame. The master brought the essay to his class next morning, and told the whole sad, shameful story, and ended by expelling the foolish writer of it from his class. He had put the pleasant thing first, the right thing last. He wanted honour and a gold medal, and his name printed in letters of gold; but what he got was disgrace, and an evil name that followed him all his days.

V. I have just one thing more to say to you. We have all got to put the right thing first, even when

no good can come to us in this world. God will still bless us for doing it; but the blessing may not appear till we are in His presence in heaven.

One of our English poets has a beautiful ballad, in which he tells the story of a little nurse who acted in this heroic way. On the 31st of May, 1868, at Newcastle, this girl, Margaret Wilson, was playing beside the railway, not far from the station, with three younger children who were in her care. While they were in the midst of their play an engine and its tender came gliding up.

The dreadful weight of iron wheels  
Among them in a moment steals,  
And death is rolling at their heels!

Maggie, seeing the danger, ran at once with a little boy to the platform. But when she looked behind for her other two babes, she saw them in the very pathway of the engine. In a moment, without thought of her own safety, she ran back. She had just time to snatch them out of the advancing wheels. And then, as with the quick thought of a little mother, she planted them in the one possible spot of safety there—close up against the sunk breast of the platform, between the platform and the rails. She put the children inside. And she covered them with her own body—standing like a wall between them and death. They were saved. She was killed. The pleasant thing for Margaret Wilson would have been to have got on the platform herself. The right thing was to save the children who had been put in her care. She put the right thing first. She was killed. But it was a Christ-like deed she did that day. Although it was done by a little nurse girl, an angel could not have done it better. She saved the children whom it was her duty to save: that was her glory. In doing that, she had to die. But she died putting the right thing first. No wonder the poet, who has lifted her story into song, ends his ballad with this burst of praise:—

My little heroine! Though I ne'er  
Can look upon thy features fair,  
Nor kiss the lips that mangled were;

Yet thy true heart and loving faith,  
And agony of martyr death  
God saw—and He remembereth.<sup>1</sup>

—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 87.

### THE PEARL-OYSTER

'Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they tramp<sup>e</sup> them under their feet.'—MATTHEW VII. 6.

**I. What is a Pearl?**—It is a well-known gem found in several shell-fish, such as the common mussel and the oyster. How it came to be there was a long puzzle to man. In ancient times they imagined it was formed from the dew of heaven. The sparkling dewdrops and the shining pearls were so like each other that they adopted the beautiful fancy that the pearl was begotten from the dew. To explain the

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Palgrave.

shining lustre of the gem this other detail was added, that just at the moment when the conception was taking place there was a vivid flash of lightning, and the pearl caught something of the fiery gleam. All these fancies are read together by one ancient writer, when he says regarding the pearl of great price, 'This Pearl is Jesus, whom the virgin conceived from the Divine lightning'.

**II. The Value of Pearls.**—The most valuable pearl-fisheries are to be found in the Persian Gulf and on the western coast of Ceylon. The annual produce of the former is said to be over £200,000; while that of the latter is set down at even a higher sum. The value of single pearls has sometimes been enormous. Those who have read Rider Haggard's books will remember the graphic way in which he describes an incident in the life of Cleopatra. That unscrupulous woman, at a supper with Mark Antony, took from her ear one of a pair of pearls of the value of £80,000, and having dissolved it in vinegar, swallowed the absurdly precious draught; and she would have done the same with its fellow had it not been rescued from her wanton pride.

But however valuable pearls may be, there are other things more valuable still. Holy Scripture mentions three.

**1. Wisdom.**—'No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies' (Job xxvii. 18). The wisdom here referred to is the Divine wisdom—the plan or purpose of God exhibited in the universe. But the same truth applies to human wisdom—the gaining of knowledge and discretion in human affairs. The price of this is far above rubies. It is not to be had for pearls. How then shall a boy get it? Only by hard work and diligent application. He must shun the company of the idle and the frivolous, and give his time and thought to the companionship of books. He must show diligence at school, obedience in the home, and reverence in the church. All his lessons must be faithfully learned, every task must be faithfully performed.

**2. Good Works.**—'In like manner, that they adorn themselves . . . not with gold or pearls, but with good works' (1 Tim. ii. 9). The wisdom must show itself in outward action. If the fountain be pure, so also must the flowing stream. The hand must follow the heart.

And all this in the way of adornment—the adornment of a good woman; and girls especially will not miss the lesson that brodered hair and golden trinkets are not the only kind of ornaments. Peter speaks of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price; and Paul points us here, in 1 Timothy, to the beauty and excellency of good works. She who is arrayed in meekness and kind-hearted generosity has no need of flounces and finery. She may even say of all other ornaments, 'Unadorned, adorned the most'.

**3. Salvation** (Matt. xiii. 46).—Both wisdom and good works must show themselves in religion. The

beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, and the best of good works is to believe on Him whom He hath sent (John vi. 29). Till this is done, we are like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls. He found a great many; for this beautiful world in which we live has many precious secrets to reveal to the earnest seeker. But not until we find salvation through Jesus does the great *Eureka*, 'I have found it,' burst from our lips. This is the treasure which all the wealth of the world cannot buy. Not all the thousands of Cleopatra could lay it at her feet. And yet, wonder of wonders, it is given to the penitent soul without money and without price. Jesus says, 'Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment that thou mayst be clothed'. 'He that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' This is true wisdom, and this is the soundest morality, to come and find in the salvation of Jesus the *Pearl of Great Price*.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 103.

### THE THREE 'PHONES'

'Ask, and it shall be given you.'—MATTHEW VII. 7.

PRAYER is a very wonderful thing. Who are we that we should enjoy the privilege of talking with God as a man talketh with his friend? He is King of kings and Lord of lords. We are but as grasshoppers in His sight—so weak, so insignificant, so short-lived. How strange that we should be able to speak to Him as simply as I speak to you! And yet it must be so, or Jesus would not have taught us to pray. When He said, 'Ask,' He knew that God would hear.

I. There are three modern inventions which are very marvellous in their way, and which have been used as illustrations of this great privilege. I call them the three 'phones,' because their names are all taken from a Greek word (*phonē*), which means sound.

1. One is the *telephone*, which enables us to converse with people a long way off. The Psalmist said, 'From the ends of the earth will I cry unto Thee'; and prayers have arisen from the strangest places possible. Hezekiah lifted up his voice from a sick-bed; Jeremiah from a deep and miry pit; Daniel from the den of lions; John from the bleak isle of Patmos; Paul as he was tossed about in the ship. And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God heard. Nay, He tells us that 'while we speak, He will answer; and before we speak, He will hear'. It is not possible for us to imagine how quickly our voices reach His ear.

2. Another is the *microphone*. You all know what a microscope is. It is an arrangement of glasses and tubes through which we look, and by which whatever we gaze upon is magnified many times. A spot of water is placed beneath it, and we see a host of creeping things which were invisible to the naked eye. Now the microphone is to the ear what the microscope is to the eye. When a child's heart is full of sorrow, and the whisper rises, 'O

Father in heaven, have mercy on me!' though no human ear can catch the sound, it is as plain as a mighty shout in the ear of God. A little girl was once asked, 'Do you think God will hear *your* feeble voice? Why, the hosts of angels continually sing before Him, and it is not likely that you will be heard.' 'Ah!' she replied, 'but when I pray, God says to the angels, "Hush! a little girl is crying to Me, and I want to hear her voice."' And her thought was true. Our Father listens for the feeblest tones, the faintest whispers, the lightest sigh of prayer.

3. Then there is the *phonograph*, which registers sounds. Did you ever hear of that wonderful frozen horn? The trumpeter had blown it in the frosty air, but no sound could he evoke. He played upon it his choicest tunes, but the music was silent. The melodies froze as he blew. But when the day's march was ended, and the horn hung above the fire, the warmth thawed its music, and the airs he had played so vainly came forth one after another, to the wonder of all who heard. That was only a fable, but the phonograph translates it into fact. For whatever you speak into this wonderful instrument is recorded against you; and years afterwards, when the maker wills, it will repeat the words you speak in the tone in which you speak them. So are our prayers written in heaven. Not one is lost; not one is forgotten. They are all treasured up in the wonderful book of the memory of God. We may forget all about them; He will remember when time shall be no more.

II. So then, wherever we are, and however feeble may be our speech, God hears and remembers our prayers. It is very wonderful, and the wonder grows upon us as we think of it, but it is true. Yet it is only half the truth. For in my text Jesus promises much more than a hearing for our prayers. He assures us of an answer. He gives us a blank cheque upon God's bank, and tells us it shall be honoured upon presentation. 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' These words are the Great Charter of Prayer.—G. HOWARD JAMES, *Talks to Young Folk*, p. 85.

### PRAYER

MATTHEW VII. 7.

THE secret why we do not have our prayer answered is when we ask earthly things first.

But our Lord bids us 'Seek first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness,' and all other things shall be added. If we put God's honour first, God will answer always at some time, although perhaps not in the very way we expected.

Here is a story which was told one Sunday in an Arran pulpit by one who knew the persons it concerned.

There lived in a quiet village a godly man. And he had a wife and three sons. His wife died, and the burden of bringing up these sons fell on him. He cried to God to help him.



Now, it so happened, that in that house there was a rush-bottomed chair, the only chair of that sort in the house, and it was at that chair this good man knelt when he prayed for his boys as well as at family prayer.

But often when alone he spent long while on his knees praying for their conversion. But he saw no change in his sons; they were hard, selfish, and worldly.

At last one by one they all left him, and went into business in some great city of the land. They prospered in business, but not in religion. But business prosperity is not joy, and prosperity was making them hard.

The father still prayed the more earnestly that they might gain their own souls, although they should lose the whole world.

But at the end of his days they were not saved.

There was an old servant who lived in the house, and to her he said when he was dying, 'I will pray now that my death may be used by God to save them'. Then he died.

The three young men came home to the funeral. And when all was past, they said: 'What shall we do with the house and the old furniture?' One said, 'Let them go to the old woman who has taken care of him'. But the eldest son said, 'Well, I consent if only you will allow me to get the rush-bottomed chair. I never heard prayers like those I heard there. I hear those prayers still when I am at business. I think if I had the chance I would not live the prayerless life I am living now.'

And the other two were softened. And with that the Spirit of the Lord came upon the eldest brother, and he said, 'Let us kneel around it once more and pray'.

And they did. And with great crying and tears they spent that afternoon together. And the end of all was, that the two younger brothers gave up their business and offered themselves to the mission-field. And they are well-known as missionaries now. And the eldest brother is one of those whose praise is in all the churches.

Jesus is seeking for you, to find you and to bless you. He is always better than our prayers.

Once I heard a very interesting proof of God answering prayers from the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Bangalore. He had been preaching to the soldiers one Sunday evening, and his text was, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,' etc. And at the close of the service a young soldier came forward, and after a little conversation asked him whether one who had been *very* bad might be saved. Mr. Campbell told him that it was just sinners that Jesus came to save, the very worst. By and by, after meeting together many times, the young soldier became a Christian, and joined the Church.

But what fixed the story of this young man more than any other on the preacher's mind was a word he said: 'I have found Christ, and that will be good news to my old mother at home'. Well, Mr. Campbell was telling this story once at a missionary meet-

ing, and giving it as a proof that foreign missions often sent back fruit of thanksgiving to the people at home, and he closed by saying: 'If anyone had been beside that mother when the good news came, oh, what joy!' And there was sitting on the platform that evening a gentleman who rose and said, 'I was beside that mother when the good news came home, for I was her minister'.

The story was this. She was a Christian mother, and she had this only son—this child of her heart, whom she loved. Well, after much trouble and sorrow, he enlisted, and she saw him no more. But she prayed for his conversion; she kept on praying for him night and day. Many a time she asked the minister to join with her in prayer. She prayed for her son for nine years without once omitting, and one morning early she hurried to the minister's house with an open letter, and in great excitement said, 'Our prayers are answered'.

The first words of the letter were these: 'I had read mother, I send you good news; Jesus has found me, and has folded me to His breast at last!'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 98.

### THE FRUITS OF FAITH

'By their fruits ye shall know them.'—MATTHEW VII. 20.

Our Christianity begins at the cross, but it by no means ends there. The cross is to us the source of all our hopes for time and for eternity, but at the same time if we fail to let the Saviour of the cross be also the guide and strength of our lives, if we fail to follow Him in our daily walk, of what good is our Christianity to us? The cross of Christ is the basis and fountain of our true life, but it is also the great sign-post set at the parting of the ways, pointing on the one hand to the heavenly city: 'Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,' and the wondrous answer of the Crucified, 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'; on the other, warning men from the way of destruction. 'One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him;' on the one hand, life and good, on the other, death and evil. There is something terribly real about those two thieves. There is something terribly real in our Lord's death upon the cross. As we look upon Him suffering there, we realise that it is not sufficient for us to come and gaze. We must go away and live for Him.

He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good;

That we might go at last to heaven,

Saved by His precious blood.

I. And so, while the cross teaches us of our acceptance before God, it also tells us of the necessity to go forward, to be true, to ever strive to know more and more of Christ. Ah! would to God that we could live more truly, more faithfully. Our efforts are so feeble. We so constantly feel our weakness. We so constantly find ourselves giving way to some temptation and dishonouring Christ. It should not be. Let the great lessons of our Lord's Passion make us more

careful to live as He would have us live. And this brings me to consider the words of our text, 'By their fruits ye shall know them'. What fruits are you and I bringing forth in our lives? On the answer to this question depends the reality and depth of our Christianity. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. If we are living for Christ it will be so with us. We can only call ourselves 'good' because of His merits, for we are made the 'righteousness of God in Him,' and it is only by His Spirit working in us and controlling our every thought, word and action, that we can bear good fruit. All comes from Him, 'Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them'. Sometimes when we enter an orchard we see a most beautiful tree covered with leaves of the richest green. It is to the uninitiated the perfection of growth, and yet no tree in the orchard is more useless. It simply cumbers the ground, and you hear the owner passing beneath its shade say to his gardener, 'That tree must come down soon, it is only in the way'. Yes, it looks all right outwardly, but it bears no fruit. How often does this tree find its complement in the lives of man! 'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.' It is easy enough to say, 'Lord, Lord'; it is not easy to live the Christian life. There are so many times when we find ourselves opposed to the rest of the world round about us. There was once a little ship's boy. The ship on which he was serving was captured by a pirate craft, and one by one the crew were overpowered. They were marched on deck and given their chance of life. 'Here,' says the Pirate Captain, 'is the plank, overhanging the ocean. Either you will swear allegiance to us and form part of our crew, or you will march to the end of that plank and be shot.' I know not how the crew decided, but I see that little ship's boy, with death staring him in the face—I see him choosing a terrible death rather than dishonour his God. I see him standing with face uplifted in prayer, waiting for the signal which meant his death; and I see the poor lad's body, covered with bullet wounds, disappear beneath the waves. Yes, it is easy enough to say, 'Lord, Lord'. It is not easy always to act up to the profession of our lips by consistency in our lives. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' But there is no likelihood of you or I proving our faith and trust by such an experience. There is no likelihood of our having to die for the Lord Jesus. No; it is only the few nowadays who are called to lay down their lives for their Lord. But surely this principle can be applied to our lives in a most real way.

II. We are not called to be faithful only in the great crises of our lives. We are called to be faithful in that which is *least*. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' We are called to render a willing obedience in all things to the claims of the Lord Jesus—we are called to stand true in regard to our every action, and thus to bear fruit. Think what this means—it

means that every time we violate our consciences we are in a very real way doing despite to the Spirit of Christ. It means that we must be whole-hearted in regard to what we deem little things. It means that we must be guided not by the Spirit of man but by the Spirit of God. We are too apt to make excuses to ourselves for what we call our failings. We are too apt to seek the advice of men rather than go down on our knees and seek the counsel of God. In other words, we want to have our own way and not to follow the way of God. Now, Christ never tells us to go our own way; in fact, He lays down a rule exactly opposite to this when He says, 'If any man will come after Me, let him *deny himself*'. This self-denial in our life is a very real thing. The flesh is constantly lusting and striving against the Spirit, and what we as Christians want is for the Spirit to have the mastery; self-denial is in this way the keynote of true life. If you want to live a life, then, which is not a Christian life, the way to do so is very simple and easy to follow. All you have to do is to please yourself in everything. Let your life be a continuous struggle to get the best of everything—to get the best apple on the dish, and then to go away into a corner and eat it by yourself. Let the thought of others be far away from your life—just please yourself, that is all. But what a contrast this is to the command, 'If any man will come after Me, let him *deny himself*!' Now let us sum up the whole matter. If we deny ourselves, we follow Christ; if we please ourselves, we deny Christ. In some of your lives there has been going on lately a sort of pitched battle between the armies of the flesh of self, and the armies of the Spirit of Christ. How can you expect to go ahead in the Christian life if you are consciously encouraging the powers of the flesh? How can you expect to learn more of Christ's power if you are consistently violating your consciences and submitting your lives to the power of the enemy of your souls? It is impossible for you to grow in grace when grace is lost sight of in the pursuit of self-pleasing. I would place before you a remedy for this. Every spiritual ill has a remedy. I know you want to meet your faults, to conquer them. Here is the means that God has provided. You have your conscience, which has too often been silenced in the past. Let it no longer be silenced. Follow it *exactly*.

Straight is the line of duty,  
Curved is the line of beauty;  
Walk in the first, and thou shalt see  
The other ever follow thee.

Exactly means with absolute precision, not swerving a hair's-breadth from what you know to be right and true. I put before you a hard standard to live up to, but it is the only true standard of life, and unless we strive after it we shall not attain much in our lives. No, let us take this standard, and by a careful attention to the details of our lives, let us strive after this great end.—NORMAN BENNETT, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 21.

## PERSEVERANCE TO THE END

'He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'—MATTHEW  
X. 22.

OUR Lord was here speaking of events in the near future. Jerusalem was doomed. The armies of Pagan Rome would in a few short years surround the Holy City, and its streets and walls were destined to be the witnesses of the most dread horrors the world has ever seen. If we read Josephus we see what those horrors were. Jerusalem is planted with crosses on which hang the quivering victims of the soldiers' fury, thousands of Jews are perishing by the sword, mothers are even eating their own children to allay the pangs of hunger when the siege is at its height, and at the end of the siege Josephus says that no less than 1,000,000 Jews must have perished. Of these times our Lord says, 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved'. But there was also surely another thought in our Lord's mind—a thought of *His coming again*, and of this coming He gives the same warning, 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved'.

Endurance is one of the first principles of life. In the thought of it are bound up all the true aims of life. There are two ways in which we may approach *endurance*. We may approach it as embodying in itself the principle of *growth* in the sense of our being made harder and thus more able to withstand trial. Or again, we may take *endurance* as expressed in such words as *continuance*, *lasting*. 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved'. What, then, does this mean to each one of us as Christians? The second meaning of the word *endurance* is of course by far the most frequent. Let us look at *endurance* in its two meanings. *First, growth*, increase in durability or hardness.

Spenser described this for us when he wrote :—

And manly limbs *endured* with little care  
Against all hard mishaps.

I. Here we have a lesson in regard to physical strength, but we can also surely apply it to spiritual strength as well. Just as the hard life of the blacksmith hardens his muscles and sets his frame, so that Longfellow could write of him :—

The smith a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands ;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands,—

so must man in his inner being be built up by the difficulties which surround his path. The boy when he first goes out from the world of home into the world of school finds out how true this principle is. He must grow, and in order that he may grow he must endure hardness. If he works badly he must suffer for it; and so through suffering the penalty of his own neglect he grows more careful in the future. If he tells a lie, his conscience convicts him of the wrong, even if he be not found out, and so the thought of it should impel him into the paths of truth and honour. So everything that he does acts upon his life in a most real way, and he *grows*, he

becomes harder. But do not forget that this growth of his may be a backward growth. It may be that he neglects his work, and is punished, and yet, nevertheless, the punishment brings no thought of amendment. It may be that the lie will be followed by many others instead of being the source of dishonour in his life. It may be that he puts away the principles of truth and purity. Ah! then we see the hardness, but it is the fatal hardness of unresisted sin, and the life becomes seared and ruined. It is possible for any one of us to do this if we will, and thus to frustrate the grace of God and the love of Christ. I ask my readers, are any of you thus forming your lives? For if so you are building up a future of misery and failure. I pray God that it may not be so, but that you may each one grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best simile that we can have is that which St. Paul uses in writing to Timothy, 'Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ'. The soldier's life is one of peril, of trial, of difficulty. He has to go through much before he is counted a good soldier. It is not one engagement, but many that prove him and bring out his true worth.

II. Yes, *endurance* means, in a very real sense, *growth*. So may each one of us endure to the end, and thus work out our own salvation through the power of Christ our Lord and Saviour. But we turn to the second thought of *endurance*, namely, *continuance*, something *lasting*. It is used in this sense many times in the New Testament. We have it in our text from St. Matthew's Gospel. St. Paul gives us the same thought when he writes to the Philippians (III. 14), 'I press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'. Or, once more, St. John the Divine, in his Revelation, has the same message given to him for the Church at Smyrna, when he is told to write, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life'. In all these cases the main suggestion is identical and parallel. *Endurance* in this sense is a very real outcome of Christianity—nay, it is the essence of it. Before I wrote this sermon I thought I would light the fire; I put the lighted match to the paper in the grate, but it burnt up and then went out. Again I tried with another match, and this time thought I had succeeded in getting the fire alight. But no, only a few red embers were left to tell of the flame that had been there but a few moments before. It wasn't sufficient that the blaze should but last a moment and then die out. No, what I wanted was for the fire to endure, to continue, to last; and so a third time I tried to light the few remaining sticks. Very carefully I placed them so that they would the more easily light each other, and soon I saw the coals ignited, and the fire began to warm the room. Now, do you see my point? You and I are very like that fire—we do not endure. There comes a special time in our experience when we feel, 'Oh, I wish I could do better'. Confirmation is such a time, and then, when



that special season has passed, the old difficulties crop up, the old sins beset us, and we hardly seem to be Christians at all—in other words, we lack endurance. And yet it is true that only 'He that endureth to the end shall be saved'. We cannot be saved apart from endurance. We cannot be Christians without endurance—there is no true life without endurance; so whether it be the endurance of growth, of increase in hardness, and strength, and grace; or whether, on the other hand, it be the endurance of continuance, of lasting effect, let *true endurance* be ours. Time passes quickly; every to-morrow brings us nearer to that bourne from which no man, no boy returns. The ship of our life is sailing swiftly over the relentless seas of Time.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.

—NORMAN BENNET, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 57.

## THE FOES OF SHAME

'Loyauté n'a honte'

'Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven.'  
—MATTHEW X. 32.

THERE is a great charm about the very sound of the word loyalty. Have you never found yourself walking rather lazily and wearily along the street, when suddenly the strains of a military band playing a stirring march have fallen on your ears. At once you changed your gait, your carriage became more erect, and your feet moved at once more quickly and without conscious effort. The music had brought with it new life. Just so; there are words, I think, that come to us like clarion calls or martial music, with a thrill of power and a pulse of strength. Surely loyalty is one of these. It is a soldier's virtue, but we have all to be soldiers. It speaks of subtle dangers to desert, to be slack, to relapse into indifference to our Captain's commands, to be subject to many inducements to unfaithfulness to our Leader's standard. Dangers lurk behind the word, for it is shadowed by a dark companion—disloyalty. Shame dogs the footsteps of the latter, but the loyal heart is a stranger to shame—his hideous form can never enter there. Loyalty does not speak to us of what we do, but of what we are. It is not certain that the loyal soldier on the field of battle will always obtain mention in his general's dispatches, or be decorated with the Victoria Cross. He is not proof against wounds, defeat, or death. Indeed, he is more likely to meet with these than is his disloyal comrade. Loyalty is a temper of the heart—an attitude of the soul. The loyal boy or girl will be always loyal, no matter where placed or what the work on hand may be—and the highest type of loyalty is loyalty to Christ. That is the source and fountain of every other form of the virtue. Loyal to Him, 'we cannot then be false to any man'.

There is a beautiful story about one of the Kings of France, Louis IX.<sup>1</sup> You will read about him one day, if you are not already acquainted with some of his brave deeds. You may see the beautiful church which he built in Paris—the Sainte Chapelle, which is like no other building of its kind I have ever seen, so richly decorated, yet so solemn and holy. When he was a very young man he was married to Princess Margaret of Provence. On the wedding ring that he wore from that day he caused three words to be engraved, 'God, France, Margaret,' and he used to say to his friends, 'I have no love outside this ring'. That was the secret of his being known to history as Saint Louis. To be a saint never means to be a milkop. It means to be the truest, best man or woman, boy or girl, that it is possible for any of us to become; and when Louis came to die, and a great preacher spoke in that lovely church about the king, he said of him, 'He was the most loyal man that ever lived in this age,' and even of a king no greater word could be spoken. He never forgot the vows he made when he knelt alongside his young bride—the words were written not only on the ring, but on his heart. If we are loyal also to God, our country, and our home, we too shall live lives that may be truly called kingly and queenly.

I. First, you see, there is **Loyalty to God**.—All brave men have begun there. The great heroes of the Old Testament all made that their starting-place. Moses forsook Pharaoh's palace, but he clung to God. Joshua was willing to let all the nation choose whom they would for leaders, but for himself and his household there was only one choice, 'We will serve the Lord'.

The great judges that were his successors only accomplished their difficult tasks when the same spirit animated them. In later days David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel are all conspicuous instances of a like loyalty. In stories that may be less familiar to you about the times of the Maccabees, we find brave fathers and sons who fought and suffered terrible hardships for the same faith. They would not bow the knee in idolatrous worship, nor suffer the sanctuaries of their fathers to be defiled, and so their loyalty saved once more the nation they loved. It was the same with the first disciples of Jesus, when brought before rulers and courts. 'Whether we ought to obey God rather than men, judge ye,' was their defence in speaking in the presence of those who acknowledged the precepts but neglected the practice.

II. Second, **Loyalty to our Country**.—This is an easy duty to most people. They are patriotic. At such a time as this, when we are at war with another nation, the spirit of love for our country runs higher than ever; men dare not be disloyal. Yet there are always some people that either are or pretend to be dissatisfied with their own land. They are ashamed of it, and say they wish they were natives of some other country, or else profess indifference to any

<sup>1</sup> See Paget, *The Redemption of War*, p. 44, for the story and the lessons it suggests.

country, and call themselves citizens of the world. There is always something disgraceful in such conduct. Patriotism is not a feeling to be ashamed of, it is one of which we should be proud. Jesus Christ was a great patriot, He loved His own countrymen before all else. Paul was a great patriot, and would have been willing to suffer anything at God's hand, if thereby he might have benefited his fellow-Jews.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 72.

### PREPARING THE WAY

'Behold, I send My messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.'—MATTHEW XI. 10.

I. **The King Coming.**—[King on his way to Parliament—crowds to see—out-riders on before to give notice and clear the road.] So when King of heaven came to earth; only, way not blocked with people, cf. Isaiah XL 3, 'wilderness,' 'desert'; blocked with other obstacles; still, a messenger sent before to clear the road and give notice. [Picture out John Baptist, work he had to do, and how he did it.]

Same King coming again—way needs preparing as before. Who will do it? 'Ministers and stewards' of God's 'mysteries'. But not only they, others also; every one can do something—even *you*. [Cf. Party of navvies making a road—all work together under the supervision of one. Ministers are, in some sort, *supervisors*; but the smallest child may be a navvy in that band which prepares the road for Christ.]

II. **The Road by which He Comes.**—Palace in heaven; has to come down into this world and find His way even into men's hearts. Once the way was open. How it got blocked up. What like now? [Cf. Cottage with bolted door in some weed-grown garden, reached off an obstructed highway. So with our hearts: pride and selfishness bolt the door. Bad habits overgrow the path. The highway is blocked up by worldliness of all kinds.]

III. **Work of the Heralds.**—Are you one of Christ's navvies? If so, how work?

1. Tell others that the King is coming and they ought to get ready.

2. Each must begin with himself. Is the door of your heart open? Are you diligently rooting up the weeds of bad habits? overturning the rocks of worldliness, so that Christ can get to you? Particularise the obstacles: idleness, self-will, etc.; all such need removing: if you would help to prepare Christ's way.

3. **Tools.**—Faith and prayer are the two most important. [Boy trying to lift iron slab by ring fastened to it. (1) Pulls and pulls with both hands—instead of pulling it up, it pulls him down. (2) Holds by one hand the hand of a strong helper and pulls with other. (Faith.) (3) Asks strong helper to help him pull. (Prayer.) So at last succeeds.]

**Conclude.**—Christ is coming, way terribly blocked up. Would you like to be one of His navvies and help to prepare the way? Then be earnest and use the right tools, Faith and Prayer.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 14.

### CHILD-VISION

'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'—MATTHEW XI. 25.

THERE is such a lot of things God hides from the 'wise and prudent'—from learned folk and those who think they are very clever—but which He shows to the little ones.

I don't know what a real baby sees when it is smuggled quite 'comfably' in its cradle, but I expect it sees things a thousand times more beautiful than anything we can see. I have watched its eyes when it didn't know I was watching, and I have seen it look steadily at something in the air; then such a big, wondering look came over it, and after that there would be such a sweet, sweet smile, and then a gurgle as if the little thing were speaking a language better than my own—the language of the soul rather than that of the lips; and I have thought—What wouldn't I give to see what baby is seeing? But he is a deep little fellow; he is a foreigner, and has only come on a visit to our world, and he hasn't gone so very far into it yet but he can still see some of the glory that he came from; and he has a language of his own different from ours, and he is not going to tell us strangers about the country of the King. He keeps that all to himself, the sly little rascal! He is a foreigner to us, but that would be nothing if he didn't treat us so provokingly as being foreigners to him, and be always bidding us to mind our own business.

Or, again, some of you little ones, have you ever looked into the fire on a quiet winter's evening? What wonderful things you have seen there! Lakes of silver and mountains of ruddy gold; armies with glittering swords, and forests thick with gloom; deep caverns where the wild beasts were crouching, and ships that sailed in the air! I have seen them all, too, so I know; and, would you believe it? I sometimes see them all yet. For I never grow old: I only kiss the years as they come, and bid them good-bye. But I keep my young eyes and my young heart still, and that is why I can talk to you.

Yes; wonderful things God reveals to the little ones, which He hides from all others. And do you know why? Just because the little ones are very simple, very trustful, and very affectionate. Yes, it all comes out of that. When we grow up we think we are bound to grow very wise and be very suspicious, and be slow to believe and quick to question, and we become very cautious, very 'prudent,' and we boast that we know a thing or two, and that people will have to get up very early in the morning to take us in. What blunderers many grown-up people are, to be sure! They become proud about dust and iron, and every day they go on losing more and more of the gold and silver. Their sight grows shorter and shorter, so that they can only see the grubby things that are within arm's-length of them, and they lose sight of heaven, and the power to see one another's hearts. And they call that wisdom, or experience, or prudence! Wisdom? If that is wisdom, it has got a fool's-cap on its head! What a wise set they

were in Jerusalem long ago, but they didn't know that the little Babe that was born in a manger was yet going to change all the world. And when the Apostles went about preaching the Cross, the philosophers and poets, the men who studied the stars, and the men who wrote books, all laughed at them. But who ever hears about these men now? Who even knows their names? And yet the Apostles! Why, you know them all; and, what is more, we are here to-day because their work is lasting still! But the wise and prudent saw nothing of this; they only saw the field that was being ploughed, and broken up, and sowed with seed; they didn't see the vision of the harvest that should follow. But humble folk did. God revealed to simple souls what was hidden from those who were too clever.

And that's the way He always works. It is the simple, loving, trustful heart that sees God, sees what He is doing, and sees what He is going to do. So keep your hearts fresh, fresh and trustful and loving, all your days. Think all the good you can of other people. Try always to see the good that is in them, or the chance of the good you can do them. Keep your heart as the heart of a little child, even though you live to ninety years. It is the way to be always happy yourself; it is the way to make all others happy; and, better still, it is the way to keep the eyes of the soul clean and bright, so that they shall always be able to see what God is wanting to show.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 47.

### ONE OF GOD'S MIRRORS

'In minimis Deus maximus'

Thou didst reveal them unto babes.—MATTHEW XI. 25.

I. THE words of this motto stand above the entrance door of the classroom in the botanical garden of a university town in Central Germany. They tell us how God shows Himself to be greatest in the things that are least, and have an obvious reference to the wonders that the science of botany discloses to us. Every little plant has its own special and peculiar beauties, some of which, indeed, we can see with our naked eye if we are only careful to notice them, but others require the aid of the most powerful of microscopes to reveal. Have you ever looked at the centre of a daisy?—many of you perhaps think that the familiar flower with its yellow centre and ring of white petals is a single blossom, but the fact is that every separate part of that white fringe and yellow centre is an individual flower. If you look at the yellow part with an ordinary magnifying glass, you will find that there are little cup-shaped flowers in great quantity scattered over it. This is only one of the commonest instances of how the wonderful minuteness of nature, the more we examine it, shows us the greater beauty. But it is not until we take a really fine microscope, and by its help examine the leaves and stems of flowers, and seeds of plants with the greatest care, that we come to know how wonderful are the least of the works of nature. We shall discover then that there are many

plants so small that we cannot even see them with our naked eye, and that even the tiny hairs on the stems of others are exquisite in their form and variety. What is true of plant life is true of every other form of the physical universe. It is often a question whether the wonders that the telescope displays in the heavens above us, or those that the microscope shows in the world about our feet, are the most marvellous. We need not trouble ourselves to decide that question, however, for both are beautiful, and in both we can, if we choose, see God. One of the greatest astronomers used to say that he loved to study the stars and discover the laws that controlled their action, because he felt that he was thinking God's thoughts after Him.

II. But the words our Lord Jesus used, and which I have placed alongside the motto, give it an even wider application. Jesus was fond of telling us how God loved the little things. The lilies of the field, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the forest were His special charge. Those little sparrows of which men thought so slightly, that if one were to pay the price of four of them in the market-place he would have one thrown into the bargain: 'Those little birds,' said Jesus, 'have their life-history known to the Father in heaven, and nothing happens to them without His loving and watchful eye noting it, and His heart understanding its meaning'. Then the life of Jesus is itself an illustration of the principle this motto teaches. Men sought for God only among the great things of earth. They thought when the Christ came He must come with the pomp and glory of an earthly king, with the wisdom and dignity of the learned teachers with whom men were acquainted. But when Jesus came it was in the form of a little child—a baby, not only weak, but poor. Greatness and riches and learning did not appear to Jesus to be passports into the kingdom of God. His disciples did not understand this, neither did the multitude, and when women brought their little ones to Him these men would fain have driven them back; but Jesus had to become the children's champion, and say that in the face of a little child men could best see what God would have them become. We get a new thought about God when we learn not only that He loves little things, but that we see Him more clearly in little things than in great. I suppose all little children are more or less afraid of big things, a strange kind of horror often haunts us in the mere overwhelming size of an object. The big, gaunt, grim trees of the forest with their tossing giant arms, the huge city with its whirl and noise and tramping multitudes, the vast, wandering solitary house—all these things breed terror in us. But the little things are our friends. The flowers, the animals that we can fondle and can take care of, the little babies that we love to nurse, the dainty things that we delight to have about us for their very smallness—'dear little things,' as we call them—these are what we love. And does it not help us to understand God, to find Him near, to find Him real, to find Him loving?—to be told that in such little things God becomes more clear to us than in the big, strange, un-



familiar and great ones. Mere grandeur might overwhelm and stun us, though it might be great to look upon, but we could never feel comfortable to live with it. God wishes us to feel at home with Him, and He says that nobody can understand Him so easily as a little child. Let us not, then, have any fear of God, that is, not be afraid of Him because we think He is far off and too terrible to approach.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 80.

### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

MATTHEW XIII. 1-9, 18-23.

THE parables of Jesus have always been great favourites with children, and indeed with all the world. Many of them are known by nearly every person in the world who can read. They are more widely known than any other words in the Bible or out of it. Who does not know the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the Publican? Where will you find such stories, so simple, so perfectly beautiful? Do you not wish to know more about them? Won't you say, 'Well, I'll try to understand all the parables'?

Take the first of Christ's parables, 'The Sower'. A great crowd has gathered to hear Jesus. Stepping into a boat, He pushes out a few yards into the Lake of Galilee. The sloping strand looks like a gallery crowded with thousands of eager listeners, who can easily hear every word of the Preacher. With the boat for His pulpit He faced the audience, and began with 'the sower'.

I. The Heedless Hearers. II. The Shallow-Hearted Hearers. III. The Double-Hearted Hearers. IV. The Honest Hearers.

**I. Heedless or Hardened Hearers.**—Their hearts are not fenced in, as your garden is, but lie open like the highway. Rude bad thoughts make a common or thoroughfare of such a heart. The wheels of traffic and pleasure make it hard. Every foul foot may trample over it, all evil thoughts may find a passage through it. Such an one 'heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not'; that is, he does not take it in; it lieth on the outside. 'Some hearers,' says Boston, 'are like a sand-glass, that let what enters at one ear pass out at another, hearing without thinking.' No hearts are harder than those that are 'gospel-beaten' and 'gospel-hardened'. The hungry black fowls of hell are ever on the wing, hovering over God's seed-field, ready to sweep down and take the good seed away. Large flocks of birds in the East follow the sower, and so the emissaries of hell, the thieves of the Word, follow the preacher. These are the bad thoughts which spoil good impressions and defeat the Word of God. These seeds are the germs of life in the soul, but often they do no good at all. The spell of a hopeful impression is often broken on the way home from church by some funny saying about the minister. On the outside of Gothic churches monsters are carved in stone, their wings outspread as in flight,

and their backs upon the church. The fancy is, that evil things flee away from the place of the holy. I once saw these monsters inside a church with their faces towards the hearers. It was the artist's mistake the pastor told us; but he added that practically it was no mistake at all, whatever it might be artistically. It is not enough to be a hearer: Judas was one of the most favoured hearers of his day. Try to understand the Word, for the Word not understood is like uncovered seed, which the fowls soon devour. It is like seed sown on the rock; it perishes as if it had never been spoken. You are not hardened yet, for you are young, but you may be hardening.

**II. The Shallow-Hearted Hearers.**—'Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth' (vv. 5, 20, 21). These stony places are rocky knolls or hillocks with a thin skin of earth. As the rock won't let the seed grow downwards, it soon rushes upwards; but when the fierce sun of the East beats upon it, all its sap is dried up, and its despairing roots lie down on the bare heated rock, and wither and die. I have seen a mower coming to such stony places in our own cornfields: in scorn and anger he cuts two or three heads of the dwarfed grain, and passes on. Verses 20 and 21 are the short and pathetic history of some who are called revival converts. They are charmed but not changed; much excited, but not truly converted. These are they that 'have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time' (Mark iv. 17). Their root is in the crowd, the fine music, the lively stir, the hearty companionships of the gospel-meeting. The Moravians every Sabbath offer up this prayer, 'From light-minded swarming, deliver us, good God'. Herod, and Demas, and nearly all in the crowds who thronged around Christ, belonged to this class. Some have such a history every week. The Word springs up in them every Sabbath, and withers away before Saturday. A young man once said to me, 'Every Sabbath evening I am almost a Christian, but I go back a little on Monday, a little more on Tuesday, and by Wednesday I am as careless as ever. I am like a four-day clock that's wound up every Sabbath and runs down on Wednesday; and I can't find out the reason.' 'I often see you dashing past on your velocipede,' I replied; 'are you as earnest about your soul as about your velocipede?' 'No, I am not,' he said, 'and it's a great shame.' That was the reason: he was more anxious to be a good velocipedist than to be a good Christian.

Time tests us. I have read that when a boy, William Burns, the great preacher and Chinese missionary, one day came home from church and said, 'Oh, mother, I'm converted now'. 'Wait a little, Willie,' she quietly replied; 'time will tell.'

**III. The Double-Hearted Hearers.**—We might also call them the half-hearted, or the divided in heart. The thorny corner of the seed-field is a parable of the heart that receives the Word and wishes also to harbour wrong desires. The thorns grow up as

rude, sturdy rivals of the grain. They shut out air and sunshine above and strangle the grain beneath. The thorns represent 'the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things' (Mark iv. 19). The thorns grow apace, for the earth is the stepmother of the seed, but the mother of thorns; and the curse that lighted on the earth fell most heavily upon man's soul. Double-hearted hearers wish to be both religious and worldly; they are undecided and unfruitful. King Saul, Ananias and Sapphira, the Galatian converts, and indeed nearly all the children of Israel in the wilderness belonged to this unhappy class. You must be whole-souled in dealing with God's Word.

David in Psalm xii. 3 draws the portrait of those who have 'a double heart,' or 'an heart and an heart' (see the margin). They wished to have a heart for God and also a heart for God's foes. Every such man is opposed to himself, distracted, disabled, and cannot bring forth fruit to perfection. He is between two opinions, and is good for nothing but halting. The warriors of Zebulon, who made David king at Hebron, 'were not of double heart' (1 Chron. xii. 33). The Hebrew again is, 'They had not an heart and an heart,' an heart for David and an heart for his rival. The two-hearted come no speed in anything. Friendship, it has been said, is one heart in two bodies: indecision is two hearts in one body, the one filled with earth's thorns, the other with heaven's seed. Your heart can hold many things at once, but you should never place side by side in it the seed and the thorns. Your whole soul must receive the seed as the ark received the law, leaving no room for aught besides.

IV. **The Honest-Hearted Hearers.**—'That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it' (Luke viii. 15). The good soil is unlike the other three; it is not hard like the first, nor shallow like the second, nor weedy like the third: it is soft, and deep, and clean. All the good qualities of the heart are summed up in one word—honesty, sweet sincerity. On man's side that is everything. Every year of my life adds to my belief of this one truth, on which Christ lays all the stress in His first parable. Put from you every false-hearted thing; be true and honest in handling God's Word; receive it gladly; try to understand it; and pray to the Lord of the harvest, and you will be fruitful. When the boy Zwingle, who became the great Reformer, began to read the New Testament he made this resolution, 'I will be true and upright before God in every situation in which He may place me'. He soon brought forth fruit one hundredfold. The Psalms agree with this parable in recommending honesty of heart to us in the strongest possible way. 'O blessed,' David exclaims, 'is the man in whose spirit there is no fraud and guile,' and times without number he declares that God's best gifts are enjoyed by the upright in heart. In the sloping fields of Galilee there were many soils, all of which were good, and thus the fruit was in some cases 'an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty'. And

some Christians are more fruitful than others, but all aim at the hundredfold increase.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 3.

### SOWING AND REAPING

'A sower went forth to sow.'—MATTHEW XIII. 3.

Just so: and it might have been you or me! For everybody is sowing seeds of one sort or another, even when he doesn't know it. How are the tiniest islands on the loneliest seas covered with grass and trees and graceful ferns and creeping plants? Because the bees and the birds have carried seeds with them when they didn't know it. And whether we mean it or not we are always planting something, and that something grows. If we have planted what is bad, bad will come of it; if we have planted what is good, good will come of it. The good or the bad things which we speak and do are the seeds we are sowing, and they grow!—they grow!

The first thing, then, we must look to is—to choose good seed. We can have it: it is all stored up for us in God's Book—for every good word it gives us, every kind thought it puts into our heart, everything it says which can cheer and help us and cheer and help others, all that is good seed which God gives. Then we must sow it, and must try to sow nothing but it.

The best time for sowing is when the mist is on the ground. The wisest sowers will tell you this. They don't see where the seed is falling, but they scatter it about; they know that the mist which hides from them where the seed has fallen is yet a very kindly, motherly mist, which will kiss the seed with moist and loving lips, and kiss it into life. And so they sow—in faith.

You must learn to do the same. Be kind wherever and whenever you get the chance, not only to the people you know and meet with at home or school, but also to strangers and the poor folk you must meet everywhere. Sow your seed in the mist: 'Scatter seeds of kindness' even when you can't see where they are going; sow in faith, just for Jesus' sake. When the harvest comes your heart will be rich—rich beyond anything you can dream of now.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 88.

### THE HID TREASURE AND THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.'—MATTHEW XIII. 44-46.

THESE two parables are twins, though not exactly alike in every feature.

I. **The Soul's Treasure.**—What is it? It is some one thing compared with which all other things are cheap, a chief good which is better than all other goods, and better than all our thoughts. In the East men worshipped treasures and women jewels; and the ambition of kings and queens was to get a

rare pearl, the like of which nobody else could have. They did not grudge giving a fortune for such a pearl. Hence the history of the great diamonds of the world reads like a romance. In the market for eternity there is one queen of pearls, one imperishable jewel. Get that, and you get all; lose that, and you lose all. One sage counts up two hundred and eighty-eight opinions about the highest good, or that which gives solid happiness; but you know better than that. It is one; and it is not a thing but a person. It is Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. The Bible is the field in which the treasure is hid. Sir Walter Scott on his deathbed asked his son-in-law to read to him. 'From what book shall I read?' said he. 'And do you ask?' Scott replied; 'there is but one.' The fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel was read, and the dying man was greatly comforted. The treasure is hid in this field, that is to say, you must find it within, not without, in the spirit, not in the letter. It is hid as 'the milk in the breast, the marrow in the bone, the manna in the dew, the water in the well, the honey in the honeycomb'. It is hid that it may be used; hid so as to be within your reach; hid for the earnest though hid from the lazy seeker. It is hid as in an open field, not as in a frowning fortress. It is not hid as shipwrecked treasures are hid, at the bottom of the seas, far beyond the diver's utmost skill. The Word is nigh thee. Christ is not far from any one of us.

**II. The Seeker.**—The true seeker is like this merchantman, travelling by sea and land, from city to city, putting his whole soul into the search, testing every pearl he finds, and careful that he be not deceived. He needs great care, for many pearls are cheats. There is a precious stone in the Portuguese treasury which is called the Braganza, and is as large as a goose's egg. It is worth £3 or £5,500,000 according to its quality. The king will not allow anyone to test its value. With the merchantman seeking is no by-job but a business; he never was more earnest about anything all his life. If you wish to know how men search for treasures read Prescott's *History of the Conquest of Mexico*. This has been called 'the century of treasure-seekers,' because so many buried cities and new mines have been discovered in it. Such a book as Mackenzie's *America, a History*, tells how men have searched for gold in our day. In 1848 an old settler was peacefully digging a trench near the Sacramento River, not dreaming that the next stroke of his spade was to influence the history of the world. His wondering eye discovered certain shining particles among the sand which he lifted. They were gold! Gold was everywhere. It was the land of old fairy tale. The bewildering news thrilled the heart of America. That season thirty thousand Americans crossed the plains, climbed the mountains, some of which were as lofty and rugged as the Alps, forded the streams, bore without shrinking all that want, exposure, fatigue, and the bloody Indians could inflict, and plodded over more than two thousand miles

of unexplored wilderness to the land of promise. Four thousand of them left their bones in the desert. Fifty thousand came by sea. From all countries they came—from quiet English villages, from the cities of China. Before the year was out, eighty thousand treasure-seekers had reached California. They who seek heaven's treasures as eagerly shall surely find them. 'And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart' (Jer. xxxix. 13).

**III. The Finder.**—Of the two men here one finds without seeking, the other seeks till he finds. Many of earth's greatest treasures were found, as this treasure was, by one who sought them not. History preserves the name of the slave—Atahualphi—who, seizing a shrub on a hill-side to aid his ascent or break his fall, and pulling up the shrub with his weight, discovered the silver mines of Potosi, the richest in the world. The silver mines of Kongsberg were first revealed to a Norwegian cowherd who watched a restless bull scraping the earth with his hoofs. Behold two ways of coming into the kingdom. The woman of Samaria, the thief on the cross, and the Philippian gaoler were like the treasure-finder; the Ethiopian eunuch and Lydia were like the pearl-seeker.

Watch the finder in the first parable. He needs not to travel into his neighbours' fields for the treasure, but finds it in his own, where he was ploughing every day. Daniel O'Connell, when the hand of death was upon him, was grieved for the sins of his youth, and longed to reach Rome, hoping to find repose there and healing of soul. The poor man somehow fancied that Rome was nearer heaven than Dublin, and that the treasure could more certainly be found in the field of Italy than in the field of Ireland. He set out, but died at Genoa. Thank God that you may find heaven's treasure at your own fireside.

**IV. The Seller.**—Our two parables are like two streams, flowing apart at first but meeting at this point, and uniting their waters during the rest of their course. They who find without seeking and they who find while seeking equally sell all that they may buy and possess the chief good.

To sell all for the one treasure is a very strong way of saying that if you don't love Christ more than all, you don't love Him at all; that the true seeker will part with everything else, if need be, for His dear sake. And he does this 'for joy'. He does not grudge the price, for he knows that the eternal pearl of his soul is cheap at any money, and that he can never buy it too dear, as he must be a gainer by the exchange, cost what it may. Without an idea of a hard saying or a hard bargain, 'for joy thereof he goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field'.

Buy thou the truth  
And sell it not again:  
Count thou no price too great for it,  
Part with it for no gain.



**V. The Owner or Possessor.**—'Treasure-trove' or found treasure with us belongs to the Queen, but there it belonged to the owner of the field in which it was found. He had every right and title to it, and no one could take it from him. Christ here teaches that the treasure becomes our very own, quite as much as if we had bought it and all belonging to it—quite as much as if the purchase-deed had been signed and sealed and registered without one single flaw. The poorest can buy the pearl, as it is a gospel-buying. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, and he that hath no money, come, buy.' Notice the business-like thoroughness of the owners. Each was determined to have it, and really make it his own. Go thou and do likewise, and heaven's pearl shall become thy possession unto eternity.

The treasure-finder made sure of everything connected with the treasure. He was like a coal-owner who must buy the whole field, and every house upon it, and everything under it down to the centre of the earth. But some people wish to get off with as little religion as possible. Bare salvation is all they care for. Their religion, like Lazarus, gets only the crumbs of life:—

Saving, as shrewd economists, their souls  
And winter pork, with the least possible outlay  
Of salt and sanctity.

Such people cannot be true treasure-seekers. And their little religion will make little hearts and little lives. It will give them little comfort on a dying day, and little satisfaction on the judgment-day. You despise niggardliness in common things; won't you despise it also in the things of Christ?

Children are born merchants. To buy and sell and keep shop is one of their most popular amusements. Come to heaven's market and buy and sell for eternity.

You are in the field every day, for the Church is around you and the Bible is in your hands. But the Red Indians roamed over the gold-fields of California and were the possessors of them, and yet remained as poor as poor can be. I believe that many of them saw the gold ore with their own eyes, but yet did not discover it, being blind to its value. Have a care that you be not like them. 'Search the Scriptures.' That Californian ditcher, up to the day when his spade turned over the particles of gold, got some good from the field. It yielded him potatoes, and vegetables, and grass, but no gold. And the Bible may do you much good; it may teach you morality, and earthly wisdom, and so on, without enriching you for time and eternity with the one thing needful. If you have not found the treasure of the kingdom yet, think, 'There is only a thin crust, an invisible partition, between me and it'. Put forth your hand, and then the glad shout that bursts from your lips won't be 'I have found it!' but I 'have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph' (John 1. 45).—*JAMES WELLS, The Parables of Jesus, p. 47.*

## THE PEARL

MATTHEW XIII. 46.

A PEARL is a very beautiful jewel. It is generally found inside an oyster shell. The largest and most perfect pearl known is about 1 inch in width and 1½ inches long, worth about £50,000. If you have read the parable, you find a merchant-man sold all that he had to purchase this treasure.

**I. The Pearl is Precious.**—'Christ loved the Church and gave Himself.'

To obtain a pearl, a diver has to risk a great deal; a long voyage, deep sea, currents, rocks, sharks. It means a test.

To obtain Christ we must go to Calvary and surrender all that we may win Him.

**II. The Pearl is Beautiful.**—So is the Church to Christ and Christ to the Church.

If we possessed a pearl we could only do two things with it—wear it or sell it.

Now if we possess Christ and Christ possesses us we can use Him in many ways—for meat, drink, clothing, ornament, help, wisdom, riches, medicine, strength, light, joy, life, pardon, peace.

If I've Jesus, Jesus only, I possess a cluster rare.

**III. The Pearl is Pure and White.**—Behold the Lamb of God. 'By His stripes we are healed.'

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

Heart.—Edmund Burke, a wise man, once said, 'Safe bind, safe find'.

Would you, as Nelson, like to be victorious at the end of life's fight? Then listen to the voice of our Lord Jesus, 'My son, give me thine heart'.

Let this be your response to the appeal—

Here's my heart, Lord; seal it for Thy courts above.—*A. G. WELLS, Sunday Gleams, p. 38.*

## THE DRAW-NET

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'—*MATTHEW XIII. 47-50.*

I WONDER that Christ has taken only one sea-story and made a parable of it. The most of His ministry was spent on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the Twelve Apostles were fishermen, and the most of His hearers saw the sea every day. His boyhood was spent in one of the loveliest inland villages in the world, and His youthful mind was peopled with its images. All speakers draw their best illustrations from the scenes that most delighted them in youth; and hence, perhaps, Christ, who was made in all things like as we are, drew the most of His illustrations from the land and not from the sea. In this I think we have a touch of His true human nature. The Sea of Galilee, 'the most sacred sheet of water the world contains,' was then swarming with fishes. The bounty of the sea-harvest was so great that many were engaged in its ingathering. Hence Christ's Apostles

were fishermen. Often the merry youngsters on the beach helped a crew of fishermen who were 'partners' to launch the boat. At first it sinks in the water up to the gunwale with the weight of a big heavy net. Two of the men row very leisurely, and two or three pay out the net. It has stones or bits of iron at the bottom, and corks or bladders at the top, so that it stands up in the water like a wall. After the men have rowed out a little way, they turn the prow of their boat slightly to the south, and then due south, and after a while to a point on the shore a few score yards south of the spot from which they started. Then their work begins in earnest, and all the boys about gladly lend a hand. The net makes a sort of half circle in the sea, and, seizing it at both ends, with much tugging and shouting they draw it to the shore. Everything in the bit of the sea inside the net is hauled to the shore. How the boys watch the frightened, leaping fishes as their speckled white bellies appear in the shallow water. At last, with a long pull altogether, they bring the net and all in it out of the water, and then a wet moving heap lies on the sand. There they see the carp, and perch, and sole with which the lake abounded, and among them worthless and dead fish and sea-animals, and snail-shells and mud. The fishers plant their pails and baskets by their side, sit down, and carefully pick out the good fish and cast the bad away, as you have seen a fisher indignantly fling from him the dog-fish or devil-fish, that had broken his nets and mocked his toil, leaving them to rot neglected on the sand. I shall now take up the parable bit by bit, and we shall occupy ourselves only with 'the lessons that come easily, like ripe fruit when the branch is slightly shaken'.

**I. The Sea.**—In the Bible the sea is often used as a picture of the great, raging, restless mass of mankind. David tells us that 'God stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people' (Ps. lxxv. 7). And the poet says:—

Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;  
Nought may endure but mutability.

The great sea remains, though parts of it are always returning to the clouds whence it came, so men are always perishing, but the race remains, just as the forest survives though its leaves are always fading away. The sea is broken up into oceans and bays, but is still one sea; so all the nations make one family. The net is cast not into a brook, or pool, or river, or bay, but into the mystic surging ocean of humankind, whose waves are the generations of men.

**II. The Net in the Sea.**—It would take me a long time to tell you how many difficulties writers have had about the net. The best explanation, I think, is one which I have not found in any book. The net here represents the kingdom of heaven not as a society or agency, but as an influence. The parable speaks not of many little nets in the hands

of men, but of one great net in the hand of the Great Fisher. Christendom or Christ's dominion in our day is far wider than all the visible churches in the world if added together would be. As the net encloses fishes, so that influence encloses many in our land who are outside the Church of Christ, and who are even stark infidels.

**III. The Fishes in the Net.**—These represent all who are in any way within Christ's influence:—

1. *They are of all sorts of people.*—The net reaches from the very top to the very bottom of the social sea. Christ's kingdom reaches the highest and lowest, great and small, sage and savage. Its aim is to surround and catch all men. None wearing the human form are so low as to be beyond its sweep, thank God, as no fishes in the sea are outside the net that rests upon the bottom and floats on the surface. We should let out the wide net of the gospel, and give it a far-reaching sweep, and expect that all kinds of people will be found within it.

2. *Many are in the net without their choice and against their will.*—Some are in the net without their knowledge even. Some of our lochs have fishes that won't take a lure or bait, and they are caught with such a net as Jesus has His eye on in this parable. So many men won't enter a church or listen to a sermon, and yet the meshes of the divine net are around them. They are caught on all sides by Christian ideas and influences. They fancy that they are only in the sea of humanity, but they are caught in the net of Christianity.

3. *Those within the net cannot escape out of it.*—I read some strange letters written to a friend by an educated Indian. He was sorry that he had been born an Indian, and wished to become entirely an Englishman. He struggled hard to get out of the Indian net, but could not. His birth, his ancestry, his blood, his very skin, proclaimed him an Indian. He must live and die an Indian. So you are in an unseen net held by an Almighty hand, and in that net you must remain. Thank God you must, for it is Christ's gracious net. During the last Turkish war the Russian army crossed the Danube and planted itself right in the heart of Turkey. The Circassians rose in rebellion against their sovereign, Alexander II.; the Rumanians boldly went over to his side; while the Servians hesitated and gave no sign. 'Be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you' (Luke x. 11), as the kingdom of Russia came nigh unto these Servians. The words mean, it has come down upon you from above, just as the air and sunshine are upon you, just as the net is upon the shoal of fishes within it.

**IV. The Shore.**—The fisher's work is not finished till the spoil of the sea lies in a glittering heap upon the shore. We are in, and a part of, that ever-changing ocean, of which eternity is the stable shore. Eternity is the Great Fisher's home, whence He started when the fishing began, and to which He returns when the net is full. To our eye there are many drawings of the net ashore—every death is an

instance of it—but to Christ's far-reaching eye there is only one landing of the great net, when its heap is laid before the judgment-seat. Man cannot seize the net, or roll backwards the wheels of on-rushing time. By invisible and invincible hands the net is drawn without noise to the place of separation.

V. **The Vessels.**—When the net and its treasures were laid on the shore, the fishermen 'sat down' leisurely, and 'gathered the good into vessels'. The good are the sweet and wholesome fishes that are fit for food. 'So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever' (ver. 49). They are the drawers of the net and the dividers of the fishes.

Mixture here, separation there, is one of the laws of the kingdom of heaven. The dividing and discovering day is on the shore which we are approaching. The good who are to be carefully gathered and preserved are 'the just' (ver. 49). They have been justified by faith in Christ; and by God's grace they have been just in their lives before their fellow-men. They only are good in the eye of God and in the light of eternity.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 61.

#### OUR HELP IN TEMPTATION

'Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me.'  
—MATTHEW XV. 25.

WE will think of Jesus as our *Help* in Temptation.

Can we stand against Satan in our own strength? No.

No, 'we have no power of ourselves, to help ourselves,' so we have to look to Jesus for help.

Those words, 'Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me,' were said to Jesus by a woman in great trouble. She knew that no one could help her as Jesus could, and so she went to Him; but did Jesus give her what she asked for at once? No.

No, He seemed to discourage her at first, and the disciples asked that she might be sent away, and yet she did not leave off praying, for she knew that if Jesus did not help her no one else could, and then, after He had tried her faith by making her wait for a time, and He saw how thoroughly she believed in His Almighty Power, He granted her prayer, and said, 'Be it unto thee even as thou wilt'.

We can learn *two things* from the story of the woman going to Jesus for help in her trouble.

I. Where to go for help.

II. The duty of perseverance in prayer.

When Satan makes your resolution so hard to keep, what is it that you need most? Help.

Yes, and it is to Jesus that you must go for help, as no one else can help you so well as He can. He *wants* to help you, He won't get tired because you come to Him so often; He says, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. So who is it you must go to for help against Satan? To Jesus.

Yes, Jesus tells you to come to Him because 'He is

able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him'. And Jesus is the *only one who can help us*, for 'there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved'. So what is *the first lesson* we learn from the woman going to Jesus in her trouble? Always to go to Him for help.

Yes; and the second lesson she teaches us is to persevere in prayer, when the answer does not come at once. Although she did not get the answer she wanted at once, she did not give up in despair, and at last Jesus did give her what she prayed for.

What is *the second lesson* from the woman going to Jesus in her trouble? Perseverance in prayer.

Yes; so you see you must ask for His help about your Lent resolution not once only, but many times, as often as you are tempted to break your resolution, and then Satan will at last leave you as he left Jesus.

Now that we see we must go to Jesus for help in our temptations and troubles, let us think of *the help we need*.

Our Master's strength is the help we need in our fight against Satan, for 'we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves'. Sometimes soldiers have been killed by their enemies through being too confident in themselves, and as an officer in Christ's army, I give you His command, 'Watch and Pray'.

Long ago, when the English and French were fighting in North America, a sentinel was found dead one morning, stabbed in the back with an Indian knife. The soldiers thought he must have fallen asleep and then been killed, and they said it was a just punishment, for if a sentinel sleeps while he is on duty his carelessness might lead to the destruction of a whole army. But on the next two mornings the sentinel at that place was found dead, stabbed in the back, like the first. A young officer asked the General to allow him to watch there, and the General consented. The officer was very watchful, and between two and three o'clock in the morning he noticed a large black hog. Before long he noticed that the hog kept coming nearer to him, so he shot it, and an Indian sprang up and fell dead. The Indian had disguised himself in the skin of a hog, and so he had deceived those other two sentinels and killed them.

Satan deceives us, that he may murder our souls, so we must always 'Watch and pray'. I have told you how St. Peter warns you to 'be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour'.

Our evil nature makes Satan's work much easier.

If you set some straw on fire you might not be able to put it out before it had done a great deal of harm. I have heard of fields by the railway being set on fire in dry weather by a spark from the engine of a passing train. Jeremiah speaks of our heart with its evil nature as being 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked'. It is always ready to listen to Satan.

What words are there in the Lord's Prayer asking



Him to keep our souls safe from sin? 'Deliver us from evil.'

Yes, when we say those words we ask God to 'keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death'.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 206.

### 'JESUS ONLY'

'They saw no man save Jesus only'.—MATTHEW XVII. 8.

I HAVE one message for my readers. It is the message on this text, 'Jesus only'. It is the message that the heavens bent low to whisper to the listening earth over eighteen hundred years ago, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men'. It is a message that comes ever fresh to us at all times of our life, and under all circumstances. Whatever we may be doing, wherever we may be, it is ever a true, living, real message, 'Jesus only'. It is no mere sentimental message; on the contrary, it is an eminently practical one. All those in the past who have followed it in the truest and highest sense have been great men, men inspired of God. Their thoughts, their words, their deeds have been handed down to posterity as the true thoughts of those who were filled with the Spirit of the living God. Yes, it is indeed a message of love, of practical effect, of power. Anyone who receives it as a fact receives at the same time a power to live, a strength in trial and adversity which the world cannot give, a triumphant victory over sin in all its forms, a living experience of the true faith in Christ, Jesus only—'The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'.

The message is a twofold one. It is one which is *deeply spiritual* in that it enters into our innermost being and becomes the means of our living communion with a living God. It is at the same time *eminently practical* in that it enters into the very foundation of all our Christian life, of all our daily experience, whatever that experience may be. Let us, then, look at the message first as concerning our inner spiritual relationship to God.

I. 'Jesus only.' Three of the disciples have gone up into an high mountain apart with Jesus, and as they are away out on the mountain-top Jesus is transfigured before them. 'His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.' The disciples were overpowered by the glory that was revealed to their wondering gaze, and, like Moses before the burning bush, they fell on their faces to the ground. They hear His voice. Never before have they been so near to their Creator; surely, then, there is a deeply spiritual significance in this wonderful scene on that mountain-top. It seems to show us how practical, how real, should be our knowledge of the Lord Jesus, inasmuch as without Him we cannot enter the Father's presence. It is Jesus Himself who enables us to pray; it is through Him alone that our prayers are accepted of God. It is through Jesus that our actions (mixed with sin as they are) are able to be called good. Our thoughts, words, and deeds must

always pass through the Lord Jesus into the presence of God. We want, then, to follow Him and to be His in such reality that it may be said of us, 'Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's,' and then by way of corollary, 'Ye are God's'. Christ Himself is the great link between our souls and God. Now let us see in what way 'Jesus only' can be the very keynote of our lives in this spiritual sense.

We look back on our lives this day, and as we do so we become conscious of very many failures. We see a past filled with all sorts of sins, sins of omission, sins of commission. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; our own hearts condemn us. We can see all sorts of thoughts of evil which have entered into our minds unchecked and found a resting-place there. We can see our lips framing those words which to our inner consciences were degrading and sinful. We can see those actions in the past which we would to God we had never done and we would fain put away from our remembrance. How true is it, then, that we are weak and sinful. The best of us are, after all, but miserable sinners, as we so often say, but rarely mean, when we join together in the Litany. What then is our hope? 'Jesus only.' This is the remedy for our spiritual destitution and shortcomings. What a grand fact it is, and how much we thank God for it when we read in His Word, 'Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be an atonement through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past'! Here we have the blood of Christ purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. Here we have the blood of the everlasting covenant applied to heart and life so that we may understand as a fact, that through Jesus is declared unto us the 'remission or passing over of the sins that are past'. Thus it is that Jesus by His blood-shedding brings us into the presence of His Father, and presents us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy. We have, therefore, brethren, 'Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus' (Heb. x. 19).

II. 'Jesus only' in the practical everyday life of experience. Jesus must enter into everything. Our life is composed of many units—of small atoms. Just as the body is formed of numberless cells, through which all the life permeates, and round which it revolves, even so is our daily life composed of numberless duties and difficulties, and in each and all of these must Jesus appear, direct, and control. Your life here is composed of Latin and Greek, of Virgil, of Thucydides, of Euclid and Algebra, and of all the different forms of classical and mathematical life. Let us all strive to remember that if we are true followers of Christ, Christ must enter into each part of our daily work. We must do it the better for being Christians, we must realise that we are doing it for Him. Then again, all our recreation must be His. Christ must be with us in the football

field, He must make us good cricketers. His influence must be felt in whatever we are doing. How glad I was, the other day when I was down at Cambridge, to hear about a certain boat captain, 'He won't stand any swearing in the boathouse'. That is what we want—a practical, living Christ, controlling thoughts, words, and deeds.—NORMAN BENNET, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 30.

### THE SWITCH

'Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them.'—MATTHEW XVII. 27.

PEOPLE do not like paying taxes. When the tax-gatherer comes round they are 'out' as often as possible; and when they have to meet him at last they pay, but pay with a grumble. That is not right, for if there were no taxes we should have no policemen to protect us from robbers, no soldiers to fight for our country, no place in which poor old people could find rest at last; we should not even have a vestry, and what a dull, dull parish that would be that hadn't a vestry! We should be as polite and civil to the tax-gatherer, then, as we would be to any other gentleman who is doing his duty and trying to teach us to do ours.

It was one of those tax-gatherers who was asking about Jesus now. Jesus was staying at Peter's house in Capernaum at the time when the tax for the Temple came due. Every Jew above twenty years of age was expected to pay that tax. He was not compelled, he was only 'expected'. This is what your father or big brother would explain as a 'voluntary assessment'. So the sharp tax-collector went to Peter about the matter. It was very polite and very proper of him to go to Peter rather than to Peter's guest, for it was Peter's house. He wanted to find out something about which he was not quite sure. He had heard enough about Jesus to know that He did a good many things differently from other people, possibly because He did them better, and He wondered if He was willing to pay His taxes. Some people are quite willing not to pay these, just to prove that they do things differently from other people; but that cannot be because they are better than others—not always!

Peter told the man he was quite sure his Master was willing to pay the Temple-tax, but, if he would just wait a moment, he would go and ask, so as to make certain. But before Peter had time to ask Jesus, Jesus asked him a very straight question. It was like this: 'Do kings pay taxes for their own thrones?' Of course they do not. 'Do their children?' Of course not. Then He was not bound to pay the tax for the Temple, for it was His. He was the Lord of the Temple; it was the earthly throne of His glory. 'Notwithstanding,' he added, 'lest we should offend them the tax shall be paid.'

Do you see what the meaning is? It is this: *Don't press even your rights if they would put other people wrong.* Jesus had a right not to pay this tax; but if He had insisted on His rights, He

would have given the impression that He cared nothing for the Temple—how it was maintained, or whether it was maintained at all; and that would have done great, great harm, for it would have made people think that, in spite of all Jesus said, He was not a religious man. For the people did not know yet exactly who He was—the Lord of the Temple Himself. And Jesus saw that, and understood all that; and so, though He had no right to pay the tax, He paid it rather than, by pushing His rights too far, give a bad impression to those who could not rightly understand.

He went off, in fact, on a *switch* for the time. You know what a switch is? When you are riding on a tram-car on a single line of rails, while your car is going in one direction, another car is coming the opposite way. What is to be done? You have a perfect right to go straight on, and the other car has a perfect right to go straight on. Very well, keep to your 'rights,' both of you, and in a minute or two, there will be a fine collision and smash, and, as likely as not, somebody will be injured. Would that be wise? Would that be really right? Wouldn't it be wicked and foolish? Very, very wicked and foolish indeed. The one or the other is bound to give way a little; which shall it be? 'Oh!' you say, 'the other, of course.' Yet if you stood midway between the two cars, and heard the one conductor say, 'The other, of course!' you would at the same time hear the other conductor say, 'The other, of course!' and then you would be puzzled why it should be the one or the other of course.

It is that 'of course' that does the mischief—it is so stupid, so dogged, so proud, and so blind. When two people are in their rights, and their rights clash against each other, then the grand one, the really great one, is the one who is willing to go aside on a switch till the other has passed. You know the switch—the little line of rails placed here and there beside the main line to let the one car go upon while the other passes by. The one has no more call upon it than the other to go off its straight path, but then, some one must do it, and that one is the best that does it first and does it best.

That was what Jesus did. He had the best of all rights to refuse to pay this Temple-tax; but if He had stood on His rights somebody else would have been put wrong—wrong in his thinking, wrong in his spirit, wrong in his understanding of things. And so Jesus stepped aside from His rights, as it were, to let others pass smoothly on. He paid the tribute.

There are a great many single rails in the world, where you and other people will have to meet, and where somebody must be loving and humble, and be ready to yield a bit, or else there will be great trouble. You have quite a right to think for yourself, and act for yourself alone; but what a poor, miserable, wretched, selfish world this would soon be if everybody thought for himself only!—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Pew*, p. 169.

## THE SAVIOUR'S OMNISCIENCE

'Go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money.'—MATTHEW XVII. 27.

THERE is a very wonderful history connected with the text, a history which will teach us some important lessons. I shall go on, therefore, to relate these remarkable circumstances, and then endeavour to make a suitable application of them.

Our Blessed Lord, accompanied by St. Peter, and others of His disciples, was returning to Capernaum. This is called 'His own city' (Matt. ix. 1), not because He had been born there, nor because His childhood and youth had been spent in it, but because when His fellow-townsmen of Nazareth rejected His message and cast Him out, He had taken up His abode in it. Indeed, Capernaum was His home (so far as He had any) during a large portion of the three years of His public ministry. For this reason we feel some interest in the place, and I therefore pause in the narrative long enough to say, that the city stood on the north-west corner of the Sea of Tiberias. It was once a town of considerable importance, and the capital of all Galilee; but now we are not even quite sure of the exact spot which it occupied. Some years ago, an American missionary travelling in those regions, found a few wretched Arab huts covering, as he believed, the ruins of the once famous Capernaum.

It was concerning this proud and wealthy city that our Saviour once uttered the fearful prediction, 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell' (Matt. xi. 23), a prophecy which was fulfilled during the wars between the Jews and the Romans.

So much for Capernaum and its eventful history. It was to this city that our Saviour was returning from one of His missionary journeys, attended by several of His disciples. On the road, the Apostles had been disputing among themselves which should be the greatest personage in the temporal kingdom which they thought that their Master was about to set up. From the opening verse of the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, it is plain that the incident of the tribute money, of which I shall presently tell you, had some connection with this unpleasant discussion.

The tax demanded was the temple tax, which all Jews were required to pay every year towards meeting the expenses of public worship. (Exod. xxx. 13.)

Jesus had lately performed a miracle, in the cure of the poor demoniac, and the tax-gatherers were puzzled to know in what light they ought to regard Him, and whether it would be proper to demand from Him the usual tribute-money or not.

I ought to state that the men who collected this temple tax were respected, because it was for the support of the ordinances of God's House, whereas the publicans who gathered the revenue for the Roman government, which then held the Jews in bondage, were uniformly despised and hated.

As the Saviour and His Apostles passed along the streets of Capernaum, one of these collectors spoke to St. Peter, who was probably a little distance behind his Master, and said in an undertone, 'Doth not your Master pay tribute?'

St. Peter would have done well to have gone and asked for directions from the Saviour, but, with his accustomed impetuous haste, he answered 'Yes'; and thus in a manner committed his Master for the payment of a tax which could not properly be claimed from Him. Thus far Jesus had not *heard* what was said, but being God he *knew*. When they came into the house, He inquired of Peter, 'Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom, or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?'

Peter (no doubt amazed that the Saviour knew what had been passing between the tax-gatherer and himself) answered, 'Of strangers.'

Jesus said, 'Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: take that, and give unto them for Me and thee.'

What He meant was, that as the temple was His Father's house, He, being a King's son, had no occasion to pay towards keeping up the worship in His own sanctuary. To avoid all needless offence He quietly yields the point, and even provides, by a wonderful miracle, for the settlement of the accustomed tax.

How poor our Saviour was in His character as *Man!* The tax demanded was only about *fifteen pence*; and yet even this paltry sum could not be paid out of the meagre purse which the Apostles carried. He might have borrowed it, or got it in some other way, but He chose rather to work a miracle that those about Him might see that while, as the Son of Man, He was thus utterly destitute, He could, as the Son of God, do what He pleased.

The circumstance I have thus related was a *miracle*. Many stories have been told of fishes which had swallowed various sorts of things, not very wholesome or nutritious; but they will not help to explain this case. St. Peter was told to go at once to the shore of the Sea of Tiberias and cast in a hook, and the first fish he caught was to have in its mouth just the sum needed to pay the temple tax.

Now, in whatever way we look at it, the incident proves that the Lord Jesus Christ was a Divine Being—proves that He was God.

If He knew that the first fish which came up would have precisely such an amount of money in its mouth, it was convincing evidence that He knew everything. And if it be said that He *made* the coin, and placed it there, this also would be proof that the same power which the Almighty Father had belonged alike to Him.

This is the point which I wish to impress upon your minds, that the *Lord Jesus Christ knows all things, and, therefore, that the Lord Jesus Christ is God.*



How it perplexes and astounds us to think of a Being who knows all things! When a murder has been committed in a sly and secret way, how long it is often a profound mystery as to who is the author of the dreadful deed! It sometimes requires long years before the facts of the case are unravelled. What care and thought, and spying out of suspicious people's actions; what arraignment and cross-examination of witnesses; what anxiety and perplexity to judge to get at the truth! The Lord Jesus Christ knows all about it in a moment.

In the case of the application which the tax-gatherer made to St. Peter the Saviour was not obliged to wait for the Apostle to come and tell Him of the conversation which had taken place; for He knew it without being told.

Wicked people sometimes say when they propose to commit an evil deed, 'Well, let us go off where nobody sees us, and then we can do as we please!' And so they skulk away from the observation of their fellow mortals, and commit thefts and forgeries, and make counterfeit money, and adulterate the groceries which they sell in their stores; and flatter themselves with the notion that it is all a profound secret. Alas! what a grievous mistake—God sees them. The Lord Jesus Christ, who gave that wonderful proof of His omniscience, He sees them.

Among Jean Ingelow's *Stories told to a Child*, there is a beautiful one called *The Grandmother's Shoe*, which I wish I had time to repeat. It would take too long to do it, so you must get the nice book and read it for yourselves.

My purpose will be answered now by reciting a very small portion of it. A mischievous little girl has been at high play on Sunday afternoon, when a good old Quaker lady had sent her to an attic room to learn a parable. All at once she espies something on a chair in a corner of the room, and in her fright she fancies it to be the grandmother, who had thus caught her in her frolic. She recovers her spirits and begins her romping again, when a gentle young Quakeress quietly opens the door and administers a mild rebuke.

'After all, there was no harm done,' said the child.

'No harm!' replied the other. 'What dost thou mean?'

'Why, you know,' said the little girl calmly, 'you know the grandmother did not see me!'

'Thou heedless child,' she answered with a look of pity, 'art thou really so much afraid of my grandmother, and dost thou wholly forget the ear that did listen to thy talking, and the eye that *was* upon thee all the time? What wouldst thou have done if, when I drew back the curtain, thou hadst seen the Redeemer standing there?'

And now, here is the lesson which I beg you to remember; that the Saviour always sees you. Try your best, by the help of God's grace, to let Him see you doing right.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 89.

## THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

'Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.'—MATTHEW XVIII. 23.

I. THEREFORE; and so we have to look back and see why St. Peter had come to our Lord and had asked him: 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?' And if it seems strange to us his thinking that seven times was so often to forgive, you must know that the Jews thought thus: If a man offended his neighbour three times his neighbour was bound to pardon him; the fourth time there was no longer any duty of forgiving him. So at all events St. Peter, even then, long before the Holy Ghost had come down upon the Apostles, felt that the law of our dear Lord was a law of love, far beyond anything that was written in the law of Moses. Therefore, because of this question, our Lord tells us this story: 'The kingdom of heaven is likened to a certain king, which would take account of his servants'. Now, here the kingdom means that new kingdom which He had come to set up on earth; that kingdom into which we have all been baptised, and in which we all hope to die. 'His servants'—now we must not look on these as if they were household servants. No; they were the governors under him of great countries: just as we read in the Book of Daniel that 'it pleased Darius the king to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes' (because there were a hundred and twenty provinces). It spoils the parable to think of these servants as we generally think of them, as if they were household servants. No, they were great princes; and all the revenues, that is, the money which came in from their provinces, they were bound to keep, not for themselves, but for their king; and in due time he would call them to account for it. And so he did; and we find what happened at the very beginning of this reckoning. 'When he had begun to reckon one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents.'

II. And then see what this servant had to pay. 'Forasmuch as he had not to pay'; that is, had nothing. And so you know very well that of ourselves we could do nothing at all for God's service. You see one parable cannot tell us everything. This does not teach us at all about our dear Lord's death, or our baptism—about those we hear in other parables. Here we are only told that this poor miserable servant who owed this immense sum of money had nothing to pay at all.

And then see what he did.

'The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all'—that is, he really felt in earnest then; and he determined to do what he could in future. 'That was right; but when he said, 'I will pay thee all,' it shows how little he knew of that which he owed. 'If thou, lord, will have patience with me, I will pay thee all.' And so you, if you think for one moment that anything you in yourselves can do in the future can make up for the past, you would do

what, as I suppose, this nobleman intended to do: 'for the future, all that comes in from my province I will pay thee; but as to the time past, I can do nothing: I only trust in thy mercy'. That time those opportunities are gone, we can never bring them back again; we can only pray very humbly that God will forgive us for our past sins; nothing but His mercy can blot them out.

And so you know very well that if any of you from this time forth set yourselves with all your heart and soul to pay your King all you owe, you can but bring Him a very poor imperfect little fragment, which, however, He will accept, because it is your best.

III. Well, and now see something else. When this servant had been so forgiven, what did he do—the very first thing? You have heard this parable a hundred times, but perhaps you never noticed the first action of the servant. The same servant *went out*—went out, that is, went away from his lord, and therefore he fell into sin. And notice this too: the king *sent* for his servants because he had a right to send for them; but this unforgiving servant *found* one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence: that is, he went out of his way and took pains to search for him. Just as we sometimes put ourselves out of our way to take offence and quarrel with somebody who meant us no harm at all. When we think how much, how very much God has forgiven us, how much He forgives us every day, who are that we should be quarrelsome and unforgiving towards those about us?

See now what that was which the fellow-servant owed—one hundred pence. If we compare the other great debt with that, it is as if we compared one million two hundred and fifty thousand three hundred to one—which means that the debt we owe God is something beyond all comparison greater than all that anyone can possibly owe us. We have sinned against Him every day and many times a day: and we ask Him to forgive us; and then we go away from our prayers, and find some one who has done us a little trifling injury, and straightway we are angry and cannot forgive, and must have amends. Now this it is that our Lord would warn us against in this parable. See how it goes on: the fellow-servant besought his creditor in the very same words that he had used to his lord, and yet those words did not remind him how lately he had been in trouble himself, nor make him more gentle towards his debtor.

The very same words! Yes, except that the fellow-servant did not call him 'lord,' as neither did he worship him; he spoke as man to man, a debtor indeed, but a debtor to a man his equal, nor to the great lord of both, having power of life and death. But there was neither mercy nor sense of justice in the heart of the cruel creditor; 'he went and cast him into prison'.

'So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry.' *Sorry*—not angry. Because good Christians are not angry, but sorry, when they see the sins of their fellows. And what did these do

then? What you ought to do; what I, what every priest, what every Christian ought to do, when we see anything or anybody going wrong: 'they went and told their lord all that was done'. We are not to go and waste our time in idle complaining to this person and that; we are to go to our Lord, and tell Him; just as the disciples did when St. John Baptist had been beheaded: they went, you remember, and told Jesus.

'Then his lord' 'called him' (and you see, tyrant as he was, the unmerciful servant had to obey at once) and 'said unto him, "O thou wicked servant" (he had not called him *wicked* before), "I forgive thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"' And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.'

So you see this wicked man was now condemned to far sorer punishment than he had bestowed on his own poor debtor; and to far sorer punishment than his lord would have inflicted on him that other time. We heard nothing of tormentors then. But now we do; and they are to torment him till he shall pay all: and as he never can do it, so they will never cease their torments.

This, then, is clear, that if, when God has forgiven us, we will not forgive our fellow-creatures, we shall displease Him more than ever. There is no heaven for the unforgiving: nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. And so our dear Lord, our own Elder Brother, who tells us so lovingly elsewhere that His Father is our Father too, does not speak of Him so here. 'So likewise shall *my* Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' His Father will not be our Father—will not own us for His children, unless we forgive as He forgives. Not just saying we forgive, and feeling angry and hurt all the time; but really and truly, from our hearts forgiving, and ready to love those whoever they may be that offend us, and show them our love by doing them some little kindness as soon as we can.

So, and so only, can we be the children of our Father which is in heaven. So, and so only, shall we share the blessings promised to the meek, and the merciful, and the poor in spirit.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 24.

#### A NEIGHBOUR

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'—MATTHEW XIX. 19. In the days of the great King Agathos many wonderful things took place. Young men saw visions, and old men dreamed dreams. Many that were poor became rich; many that were rude became gentle; and towns and villages that were almost deserted and in ruins were rebuilt and filled with happy crowds.

Just on the outskirts of this great King's kingdom, in a hollow among lofty hills, lay one of those ruined villages. Everything in it had a broken-down and decaying look. The houses were old and mean and

bare; grass grew upon the streets; and the inhabitants were ignorant and sad and poor.

One morning in early spring, a stranger entered this village. It was noticed that he walked from one end of the main street to the other, looking to this side and to that, at the houses; but more eagerly still into the faces of the people who were passing by.

The labourers began to come out from their homes to go into the fields: the stranger examined every face as it passed. A little while after, the young women came out to the wells for water; the stranger went up to these and questioned them one by one. By and by, he turned aside to a blind old man, who sat at his door to enjoy the heat of the morning sun, and he put many questions to him. But neither the old man nor the young women could give him the information he wished. A look of distress and disappointment came into his face. The villagers saw him turning away into a back street that had long since been deserted. Then they noticed that he sat down on the stones of an old wall, with his face towards a roofless cottage, which had neither window, nor fireplace, nor door.

This was the cottage in which the stranger was born, and in which he had spent his early years. As he sat gazing on its ruins, the old forms he had known so well in his boyhood seemed to come back again. He saw his father working among the flower-beds in the garden; and his mother, now knitting and now cooking, beside the kitchen-fire. The very laughter of his brother and sisters, as he had so often heard it long ago, seemed to come back again and fill his ears like a song. And there came back also the memory of a day when that laughter was stilled; and along with that the form of a beautiful sister, who on that day was carried out to her grave. Tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

And then one of the strange things I mentioned at the outset happened. Behind the cottage rose up the great sides of the hills among which the village was nestled. Far up the huts of shepherds could be seen like little dots scattered here and there; and on the green pastures flocks of sheep. As the stranger was gazing across the roofless and broken walls of his early home, his ear caught little snatches of a song which some one was singing among the hills behind. Then he beheld the singer—a little girl—stepping down as if she were coming from the shepherds' huts. Her feet were bare, but she stepped downwards as if she had wings. Her yellow hair was blown out behind her with the wind. She was coming directly to the stranger, and almost before he knew she was at his side, and singing the song he had heard:—

Friend and brother wouldst thou find?  
Hearts of love around thee bind?  
Be thyself a heart of home;  
To gentle heart, hearts gentle come.

Then she stopped singing, and fixing her eyes earnestly on him said, 'You are in pain, my brother?' And although she was but a little child, and one he did

not remember to have seen before, the stranger could not help opening his heart to her.

'I have come from the most distant shores of our King's country to find my brother and sisters, and they are not here. When I left this village I was poor. I am rich now, and would share my riches with them if I could find them.'

While the stranger was speaking the little girl seemed to grow more and more beautiful. Her eyes shone like bits of the blue of the sky, and sent their glance into his very soul. As the morning sunlight fell on her hair it seemed like a crown of gold around her head. And then, as she stood before him there in her exceeding beauty, it flashed upon him that somewhere or other in other years he must have seen that face. And then in a moment more he knew that this was the very face of the dear sister who had died. Then she said, 'Come with me, brother; your brother and sisters are found.'

She took him by the hand and led him back into the main street of the village, and said, 'Do you see that blind old man whom you questioned? That is your father.'

'But my father is dead these many years.'

Without stopping to answer him, the beautiful child went on, 'Do you see those young women you spoke to coming from the wells with water? They are your sisters.'

'But my sisters must be old and grey-headed now.'

And once more, without replying to him, the child said, 'Do you see those labourers in the fields, whose faces you looked into so eagerly? They are your brothers.'

'But I had only one brother.'

While he was saying this the children began to go past to school.

'And there,' exclaimed his young companion, pointing to them, 'are your children.'

The stranger was perplexed. Everything about him seemed to swim in the morning light. The children, the young women, the labourers, and the blind old man appeared as if they were drawn up into the light. And into the same light the beautiful form of his child sister also passed, smiling towards her brother with a tender grace, and singing her gentle song. And then everything disappeared.

When he came to himself he was still sitting on the stones of the broken wall. The roofless cottage was on the other side of the way, but the little girl was gone. And from where he sat he could see neither children nor grown-up people of the village.

He was never quite certain about what had taken place. Sometimes he fancied he had fallen asleep, and had dreamed a happy dream. Sometimes it seemed as if he had seen a vision, and as if the beautiful child stepping down the hill-side with her song and her words of teaching had been real. But nobody else had seen her; and the shepherds in the huts did not know of such a child.

But whether what he saw and heard was real, or



only a dream, it was the turning-point of life to this rich stranger.

The song of the fair-haired child took possession of his heart, and by means of it God changed his heart, and made it gentle and neighbourly; and the light of the neighbourly heart came into his eyes, and he saw in the ruined village a new world and new duties there for himself. Long afterwards he used to tell that he saw that day what John had seen in the Isle of Patmos—'a new heaven and a new earth'. He knelt beside the ruined cottage and lifted up his heart to God, and said, 'O my Father, let the heart that was in Thy Son Jesus be also in me! All that I have is Thine; from Thee it came, to Thee it shall return. Help me to fulfil Thy will.'

He rose up a new man. He said to himself, 'I will abide in this village and build up its ruined walls, and make the people of it the sharers of my wealth.'

So he abode in the village; and he became a neighbour to old and young. The inhabitants became his children, and his brothers and his sisters, and his parents. And light arose in their dwellings, and prosperity came back into their streets, and songs to their lips. The rich man was happy, and the poor were blessed; and in his old age, when young people were setting out in life, and came up to him for his blessing, he used to repeat to them the song which the fair-haired child of his vision had sung to him, and call it 'the secret of a happy life'.

Long years have passed since those things took place. The ruined village is now a large and prosperous city; but in the centre of it stands to this day a granite cross with the portrait of a beautiful child cut on the stem, and underneath the words of the song:—

Friend and brother wouldst thou find?  
Hearts of love around thee bind?  
Be thyself a heart of home;  
To gentle heart, hearts gentle come.

That is the monument of the rich stranger who shared his riches with the people of the ruined village. His name is unknown. But in the histories of the city you will find that the founder of its prosperity is described as 'the man with the neighbourly heart'.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 37.

#### HOSANNAS OF THE CHILDREN IN THE TEMPLE

'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'—MATTHEW XXI. 9.  
'The children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David.'—MATTHEW XXI. 15.

LET us try and think what it was that led these young ones thus to welcome Jesus. I cannot suppose it was because they believed Him to be the Son of God, or the Messiah promised to their nation. They knew little or nothing about, and pondered little or nothing about, types, or prophecies, or miracles. More-

over, there was no appearance of greatness or majesty in that lowly Man of Nazareth. He wore neither crown, nor sword, nor royal bracelet, like the old Kings of Judah and Israel; so that if they called Him, like the other worshippers that day, 'son of David,' it was with no thought of a throne, or palace, or kingdom. I believe then, surely, in the case of most, if not of all these child-worshippers, that they raised their Hosannas just because they saw in Him whom others were welcoming with Divine honours, One so loving, and kind, and good. Goodness has a wonderful attraction. I dare say some of you have a magnet at home. If so, you know how it attracts to itself small steel and iron filings, and makes them cling to it. Well, goodness acts exactly like that magnet; especially when manifested towards the weak and the feeble. And the greater the goodness is, the more powerful is its magnet-attraction. Have you never seen this even in the lower creation? I will give you a story to illustrate what I mean. A thousand years ago, not long after Christianity was brought to Britain, there lived a very saintly man in the fens of the south-east of England. In a lonely spot there he had built himself a hut or cell in the midst of reeds and alders, the haunt of various birds and of a few timid deer. Guthlac was specially kind, and loved whatever was gentle and good and holy. One day he was talking with a person called Wilfrid who had come to visit him in his solitary retreat. While they were conversing, two swallows flew and perched themselves, now on his knee, now on his shoulder, now on his hand. His friend expressed his wonder at their tameness; but Guthlac replied, 'He who leads his life according to the will of God, to him the wild birds and the wild deer draw most near'.

Was it not so in a higher, holier, diviner sense in the case of God's Holy Son—the kind and gentle and loving Jesus: He who was goodness itself, without one spot or flaw in it?

I. There was something in His very look and ways which at once attracted these Temple children. I doubt not all of you I now address have felt that there are people you take to at once, directly you see them; and others, again, you don't like or care so much for. I have often observed a kind man, though quite a stranger, coming into the room where little ones are playing. They are almost immediately pleased with him; they like his winning voice and ways. And though at first perhaps they may hang back, as if not quite sure whether to approach him or not, in a few moments they are climbing up his knee, and with dimples in their cheeks stroking his forehead, and telling him all about their games and playthings. As we say, 'they are at once at home with him'; the genuine, real, loving heart is there. On the other hand, there are some grown people, who in their own way when they get among children, smile upon them, and attempt to stroke them, and show an interest in them; and yet they might be in their company for months and years, and they would not get a bit better acquainted. The children would

not take any more kindly to them : they would even turn away, they hardly know why. I believe this is the key to the picture now before us, of Jesus and the Children in the Temple. These children saw nothing whatever in the outer garb of that lowly Pilgrim to indicate the great coming Deliverer—whose name was to be called 'Wonderful—Counsellor—the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father—the Prince of Peace'. They may have heard of Him indeed, as the gracious and Holy Prophet of Galilee, who went about continually doing good, who had cured by a word the sick, the diseased, the dying, and even raised the dead. But it was when they saw for themselves His gentle look, and met the glance of His kindly eye, and heard the tones of His tender voice that their little hearts were attracted towards Him.

II. Let me draw from the scene just one lesson for you, it is this—that *all may do something for Jesus*.

In the beginning of this same twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew we read of a farmer or villager, at Bethphage, who on that Palm Sunday had lent two animals—an ass and its colt—for the procession across the Mount of Olives. On one of these, as King, the blessed Saviour rode in triumph. Perhaps the man could give nothing else, and be of no other service. But these he willingly made over whenever he was told by the disciples, 'The Lord hath need of them' (Matt. xxi. 3). Grown-up men and women, as we have seen, took off their garments and cast them in the way. Some who could not do this, who had no befitting mantle to provide, went into the groves and gardens of palm, and gathered branches from what was called 'the tree of victory'. Children whose little hands were perhaps unable to break down boughs or gather the fronds of the taller tree, would be content with sprigs of olive, or wreaths of wild flowers. And if they could not get even these, they could at least assemble around the blessed Jesus as He entered the Temple gate and cry with their young voices, 'Hosanna! Hosanna!'

This then, I repeat it, is the lesson you may learn from this passage of sacred Scripture: that *all may give something, and do something, for the Saviour*. It tells you too, that you are not too young or too little to glorify Him. That Temple, beneath whose white pillars these children stood, had its small stones, and small cedar-beams, and small rafters, as well as large ones. So it is in God's spiritual temple. There are 'vessels of small, as well as great quantity; vessels of cups, as well as vessels of flagons' (Isa. xxii. 24). You remember in a beautiful Old Testament story I know you much love to read, that Benjamin, 'the youngest,' had his share in taking balm and honey and spices and myrrh to his brother Joseph in Egypt. You may do the same to the true Joseph, that Elder Brother whom we have all sold by our sins; but who is now exalted on a throne of glory. The very youngest of His brethren may help to bring Him presents. The youngest among you may imitate

Mary the sister of Lazarus; break your little alabaster-box of ointment, and cause the fragrance to be wafted all around.—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 8.

#### HOSANNAS OF THE CHILDREN IN THE TEMPLE

'And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'—MATTHEW xli. 9.

'The children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David.'—MATTHEW xli. 15.

Do you see that little town nestling amid some green mountains?

I cannot tell you its name, as it is not given. Perhaps it may have been in a valley with a stream running through it. For among these hills of Peræa, with oaks and olives dotting their slopes, a great number of rills sang their way down to the River Jordan.

Jesus and His disciples are there. He is just going out of the town, passing perhaps under the shady trees that were usual at the gates, when He is suddenly made to stop. A number of mothers have gathered around Him with their children, some of them carrying tiny infants.

What do these mothers want?

They wish, before He goes away, to get His blessing for their little ones. I cannot now dwell on the beautiful picture. But Jesus does what they ask Him to do. He laid His hands upon their children's heads; first on this one, then that one, and then another; and declares that the kingdom of heaven is peopled with such (Matt. xix. 13-15).

It was His last journey to Jerusalem. He was then on His way to the cross of Calvary, on which He was to be nailed, for you and for me. We might well have imagined that His thoughts would be quite taken up about His own sufferings, and that He would have no time to think of others; least of all about infants and children. But the words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah (xl. 11) are again fulfilled, as I believe they had often been before in the course of His ministry, the Great and Good Shepherd is seen 'gathering the lambs with His arms, and carrying them in His bosom'. Can you not call up before you His winning smile? Could these children ever forget, when they had grown to manhood or womanhood, the music of that voice of tenderness and love, which sounded that day among their native glens—

Let the little ones come unto Me!

But attractive as this scene is, more touching and more beautiful still is the one which so shortly followed it, described in our text. Let us go back in thought to that first 'Palm Sunday,' and try to imagine what took place on so specially joyful a day.

It was the 'Sunday,' if we may call it so, preceding the death of Jesus. He had come in triumph along the steep road from Bethany across the Mount of

Olives. A great crowd of people had gone out to meet Him.

It was a *Royal procession*. Perhaps some of you may have heard, from the lips of those old enough to remember, about the Coronation, now very many years ago, of our own gracious Queen in London. How the trumpets sounded, how the cream-coloured steeds bore her along in her carriage of state. How every window had its banners and loyal devices, and the air rang with the shouts of a loving people.

In the passage from which the text is taken, we have brought before us the entrance of 'the Prince of the Kings of the earth' into His own Jerusalem. It must have been a similar stirring and exciting scene: for we read 'the whole city was moved' (Matt. xxi. 10). Great triumphal processions were common in that age of the world. Rome witnessed many such. War chariots, with horses in rich trappings, ascended to her Capitol. In these were seated heroes with garlands on their brows. Gold and silver vessels were borne before them by slaves, fragrant incense was wafted, and brazen trumpets rent the air. You can see in slabs brought from the ruins of Nineveh now in our British Museum, and more vividly still in later sculptures and paintings, representations of warriors celebrating their victories. In most of these cases, however, they are pictures of cruelty. Captive kings loaded with chains are yoked to the victor's car. Heads are carried or borne aloft, which the sword has severed from the body. Weeping women, bowed with grief, are tearing their hair as they lead along their fatherless children.

In the triumph spoken of in the text, Jesus had no such doleful cries entering into His ears; no such victims of misery and torture were borne before Him. No chains, nor slaves, nor swords, nor battle-axes, nor spears, were seen adorning this hour of earthly glory. His only weapons were palm branches, emblems of peace! When angels yoked His chariot to bring Him down from heaven, they blew their golden trumpets, and said, 'Peace on earth, goodwill to men'. His name was 'The Prince of Peace,' and His whole life on earth bore witness to the truth of the title. Oh, if the princes of this world would only follow the will and the example of Jesus, the din of war would never be heard. He would 'break the bow, and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire' (Ps. xlv. 9).

But let us follow the procession from Bethany. I see old men there, reverend Jews with long flowing beards, who like Simeon had waited for the consolation of Israel. I see strong middle-aged men there. Some have climbed up the tall palm-trees, and are cutting some graceful fronds to be carried in their hands, or weaved into green leafy carpets to be strewn on the way. Others have broken boughs from the olive with its sombre leaf coated at the back with silvery grey. Others are taking off their cloaks of brown and white stripes, such as I have seen the people wearing at this day in Palestine, also to spread on

the road for their King to pass over. I see women, too, there, like Mary Magdalene: not improbably would Martha and Mary of 'the town of Bethany' be among the number, full of love to Him who had raised their dear brother from the dead.

Loud were the voices, both before and behind, which cried, as the Divine Saviour 'in lowly pomp rode on to die,' *Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!* He crossed the brook Kedron; ascended the steep road that led to the Temple; and there the reception awaited Him of which St. Matthew speaks. The grown-up people had sung their joyous song of welcome on the public road across the Mount. But a new band of worshippers now take it up. New voices in the Temple court break on His ear.

Tell me, who were these?

Yes! it was 'the children'; and mingling with their Hosannas, I almost think, as they look across the valley on the green slopes of Olivet, and see the King of Zion coming to His own City and Temple, I almost think I hear them singing the very words of their own great Prophet—'How beautiful upon the mountains (*the Mountain*) are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!' (Isa. li. 7). These little children were, doubtless, of varied ages; some older, some younger; but they all too had their tiny palm and olive branches, gathered probably from the gardens around; and as they saw the meek and gentle Jesus enter 'the Beautiful Gate,' they crowded round Him, and joined together anew in the joyous shout 'Hosanna to the son of David, Hosanna in the highest!' Some sang with their clear treble voices; others waved their palms; others their olive branches; perhaps some threw at His feet handfuls or wreaths of the red anemone, and other flowers which would then be in full glory. Look at that child with its fair face and dimpled cheeks: how he clings to the Redeemer's gracious hand! See that other dark-eyed boy with raven locks kissing the hem of His garment! See these others pressing eagerly through the throng, that they may bow at His feet, and, like the Peræan little ones, get His blessing! The eyes of Jesus were still wet with the tears He had shed on the brow of the Mount, when He wept over the city; but I think that loving scene and loving welcome would dry them. There were others at that moment in the Temple besides the children. Among these we read of 'the blind and the lame' that 'were healed'. They, doubtless, gathered around with their songs and offerings, 'walking, and leaping, and praising God'. But I am very sure that no voices which that day sounded in His ear, no garlands which that day adorned His triumph, would be so pleasing as the voices of these child-worshippers, and the tiny branches and flower-wreaths cast by them at His feet.—J. R. MACDUFF  
*Hosannas of the Children*, p. 1.



## THE TWO SONS

'But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto Him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.—MATTHEW XXI. 28-32.

THE last seven of the parables, of which this is the first, form Christ's farewell address of caution to the Pharisees and His disciples, as John xiv.-xvii. is His farewell address of comfort. The last of these seven, the Parable of the Pounds, was spoken on the Friday before His crucifixion, and the remaining six seem to have been all spoken on the Tuesday before the Friday on which He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. This fact should throw a tender interest around all the following parables. The strange shadow of the cross is over each of them. This parable was spoken to the leaders of the people, whom Christ charges with double-dealing, for they had been trying to say both yes and no about the baptism of John (vv. 23-28).

It reminds us a little of the Prodigal Son. The father in it is a small farmer who wrought his own farm with the help of his family. The question Christ asks in verse 31 is self-evident; to state is to settle it. The first son represents the publicans and harlots, the second son the Pharisees. We have here—

## I. God's Call.

## II. Two of Man's Replies.

1. **God's Call.**—The Rabbis used to say that there was a mountain of meaning in every word of the Bible, and their saying applies to the words of God's call. Fix each of them in your mind.

1. *The call is personal.*—'And he came to the first, and said, Son' (ver. 28). 'And he came to the second, and said likewise' (ver. 30). While the call is the same to all, it comes to us not in the mass, but man by man. It singles each out, takes each aside, and speaks to him. As God spoke to Jacob at Bethel, so the God of Bethel speaks to you, and to the out-cast at the lowest step of the ladder, with only a stone for his pillow. There comes to you not merely a noise, nor a word, but a *voice*, and, if you listen, you may distinguish it from earth's harsh voices which fill the air, and strive to drown or mock the voice from heaven. The God of Samuel still speaks to every listening child, and calls him by name. As the lamb in a bleating flock knows its mother's voice, so Christ's sheep and lambs hear His voice, and follow Him.

2. *It is a loving call.*—'Son' is the first word in it. Everything here is fatherlike. The father did not send, but came; he did not shout or thunder at a distance, as a tyrant does; he used no hard name; he did not say boy, or servant, or slave, or hireling, but son, or rather child, dear son. God speaks unto

us as unto children. He pardons us, makes us His sons, and then asks us to serve Him from love. His grace gives us the glad spirit of a son, and the child's heart leaps up at the father's voice. No man ever works well in His vineyard, ever works at all, till he becomes a son. The law of the kingdom is, first sonship, then service.

3. *The call comes to us with authority.*—'Son, go,' not, 'You might go, or, Will you go?' It is the voice of our Father, but He is also our rightful owner, and our God. His authority is not melted away in His mercy. His justice is as great as His mercy. He has every right to command, and we have every reason to obey. His invitations are commands, and His commands are promises which appeal for our consent. If you don't obey, you insult and provoke the Almighty. The preacher has a right to bid you go in God's name, and you have no right to refuse. What think you about going? You are to go not like a trembling beggar venturing unasked into a lordly hall. You are to go with a humble mind, no doubt, but with a firm step, as having God's authority for going.

4. *It is a call to work.*—'Son, go, work,' not 'go, hear, wish, dream, resolve, profess, rejoice'. God has real, solid work for every one, and work at hand, at the door; for God's vines touch our homestead, and their tender shoots twine around our door and windows. God's vineyard needs work, and your work. A child's ambition is to work, and to do the very work his father does. Our little children very often amuse and entangle us by insisting on doing our work, and often a father can give his boy no higher honour and joy than by allowing him to share his work. This honour and joy God offers to all His children. He does not treat them as babes, or invalids, or imbeciles; to each He says, 'Son, go, work'.

5. *It is a prompt call.*—'Work to-day.' To-morrow may be too late, or you may have no to-morrow. The child's evening prayer suits us all well:—

This night, when I lie down to sleep,  
I give my soul to Christ to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.

6. *It is a call to vineyard work:* 'Work to-day in my vineyard'.—A vineyard needs to be nursed almost like an infant. Some fields we call nurseries because the young plants in them must be tended like young children. Leave a vineyard to itself, and the despairing vines soon fall down and are strangled under luscious weeds. But a rich crop rewards the diligent vinedresser. He needs great diligence, when he works as a true son in his father's vineyard. For diligence is the Latin word for love, and that work is well done which love does. This vineyard was the family inheritance; both father and son ate its fruits, and drew their wealth from it. A proprietor's son told me that he was making money, and that he used it all in improving his father's estate.

His father's interests and his were one. The vineyard in which you should work is your Father's vineyard and yours. The way of God's glory is the shortest, surest way to your own good. He who forsakes God forsakes his own mercies. He who does most for God does most for himself. People speak of ministers having a corner in 'the vineyard,' but you have a corner in it as much as the most favoured preacher. For to you the call comes, 'Son, go work to-day in my vineyard'; and of you, if you are His, Christ says, 'I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit' (John xv. 16).

II. Two of Man's Replies to God's Call.—Four replies are possible, of which two are simple, Yes and No, an unchanging Yes and an unchanging No; and two are double, No-and-Yes, Yes-and-No.

1. *No and Yes*.—The first son said rudely and bluntly, 'I will not'. He did not soften his 'I will not' by 'I am sorry I cannot'. His reply was No, without phrases. 'But afterward he repented, and went.' Here is a perfect explanation of repentance.

2. *Yes and No* was the reply of the second son. His 'Aye and No too was no good divinity'. He said Aye and No to everything his father said to him. 'I go, sir,' was his reply, or rather, 'I, I, sir'. It is a strong phrase for eager and entire consent. But he did not repent or change his mind, for he never meant to go. We wonder why it is not written, 'He said, I go, sir; but went not'. It is, 'I go, sir; and went not'. Yes with him really meant No. His lips lied, but his life spoke the truth. His going not was the consequence of the spirit in which he said Yes, and so there is no disjunctive particle in our text. The grammar of such assent requires an *and* instead of a *but*.

This son is the representative of the Pharisees, who made a great show of obedience, and politely said Yes every day of their lives. But when John and Christ brought God's call to them they refused it, while the publicans who up to that time had rudely said No and only No, repented and entered the vineyard.

'Yes and No are for good or evil the giants of life,' and they are the makers of our eternity. Here is God's call, 'Son, go work to-day'. Do you accept of and close with the call? The Church on earth waits, the angels in heaven wait, the Holy Spirit waits, Christ waits, the Father waits for the reply, 'Yes, I do'. Give God your eternal Yea, as He has given you His, for 'all the promises of God in Christ are Yea, and in him Amen'.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 269.

### STARVING SELFISHNESS

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'—MATTHEW  
XXII. 39.

LET us try to think if we can *starve selfishness*. Then it will be a good Lenten fast if we do that. It is such an ugly thing.

Do you know when they were hunting King Charles, like a hare, all about the country there was

a certain nobleman, and he said, 'I will be your friend; I will come and fight for you'. And there was a battle, and the nobleman didn't come; so King Charles said to him afterwards, 'Why did you not come, as you promised?' And the nobleman said, 'I could not get out of bed. I never can get out of my bed in time enough for anything. I am so fond of my bed. I should have had to get up at six o'clock; but I could not. I could not conquer myself to get up in time enough.' A poor friend to King Charles was that nobleman! That was self.

There is a lake in the Holy Land; everything runs into it, and nothing runs out of it. It is 'The Dead Sea'. The water runs into it; but it waters nothing else again. So it is a Dead Sea. Everything about it is dead. Don't you be a dead sea! I hope your heart won't be a dead sea, filled with self; everything coming in, nothing going out. Don't be a dead sea!

Now I want to help you, if I can, to starve and kill this monster, this great, ugly thing, self, self! Shall we try how we can do it?

I. There is a beautiful little word, made up of four letters. I want you to spell it. Can you spell? The first letter is L, the next is O. What is the third? V. What is the fourth? E. That is it—LOVE. A beautiful little word, much better than self. That has four letters in it too. SELF. That is very ugly. LOVE is a beautiful thing, I want you to write it, not in ink, but somehow or other in very large letters. I should like it to be written in the kitchen, and in the parlour, and in the drawing-room, and in the schoolroom, and in the nursery, and in church, and in the streets, and everywhere. LOVE written up everywhere. And I think we might almost write it in heaven. What is love? Heaven. They are almost the same thing. Love—heaven; heaven—love. Try and write it everywhere. See Love everywhere. Love in my heart; love all around. It is beautiful to love. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

I have not asked the question 'Who is my neighbour?' have I? 'Who is my neighbour?' Do you know what 'neighbour' means? 'neigh' means *nigh*, it is an old word meaning *near*; and 'bour' means a person who dwells; 'so neighbour' means a *person who dwells near to you*. Then, 'who is my neighbour?' The person who lives next door to me? Yes, he is 'my neighbour'. Are you kind to the person who lives next door to you? Does everybody know the name of the person who lives next door to him? Were you ever kind to the person who lives next door to you? If they have been in trouble have you been good to them? I think I ought not to say it, perhaps, but the poor do beat the rich in this matter, the poor do know who lives next door to them; but I am afraid the rich do not know who their neighbours are. But certainly we ought to know who lives next door to us.

But do you think it means only the person who is 'a neighbour' to us. I will tell you who is 'a neighbour'—anybody who is in any way brought near to you.

Supposing there were a man in China that in some way you could do good to; that you could send to that person in China a Bible, or a missionary; then that man in China is 'your neighbour'. There is a sort of bridge from him to you. He is brought near to you. Everybody who is so brought into contact with you, that you can speak to them, or pray for them, is 'your neighbour'. Therefore it takes in nearly all the world; not quite; but everybody to whom in any way you are brought near—who is your 'neighbour', who is *near you*, is 'your neighbour'.

Do you know what the word 'kind' means? Take the word 'kin'. The meaning of that is a *relation*. 'Kin' means your relation; and then put the 'd' to it, it means 'kind'; you are to treat him like a relation. You are to be *kind* to everybody because everybody is related to you. Everybody is your brother and sister. In all the world we are brothers and sisters, all of us. Therefore all men are 'your kin,' you must be kind to all, be like a *kinsman* to all. 'Kind' means 'kin'; and everybody almost is 'your neighbour,' because you can *get* near to almost everybody. If you like, you may say everybody is your kin. Therefore you must be kind to your neighbour; kind to everybody.

In a street of a town there was standing on the top of a hill that went down the street, a wagon, and there were four fine strong horses harnessed to the wagon, and in front of the wagon a board ran across from axle to axle, and on this board was sitting a little boy. The driver of the wagon got away for something, and there was nothing left on this large board but this poor little boy. While he was sitting there something frightened the horses, and they set off full gallop down the hill. There was a terrible cry; the poor little boy cried, and everybody was alarmed and frightened. But there was a woman there, and this woman, though she was very much frightened, she cried out, 'Stop the wagon! stop the wagon!' Some men ran after it, and tried to stop it. And there was an old man there, a cold-hearted old man, like an icicle—a cold, old icicle—and this cold old man said to the woman, 'What are you making such a fuss about it for? Is he your child?' 'No,' said the woman, '*but he's somebody's child*. That's the same thing.' That woman had 'love to her neighbour'. It was not her child, but she was kind to one brought near her, just as if it were her own child.

II. Now if we look at this commandment—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' there is one rather strange thing about it: will you think what it is? You are to 'love your neighbour *as yourself*'. Am I then to love myself? That is a puzzling question. Do think about it. Am I to love myself? Yes or no? I am to love myself, for how could I love my neighbour rightly as myself if I did not love myself. Then I must love myself. I think so. I would not give a fig for a boy or girl who did not deal in self-respect. If I saw a boy or girl going about anyhow, did not care about dress, with dirty

hair, dirty skin, torn clothes, slipshod, not caring at all how they looked, or what people thought about them, I should say that boy and girl will come to no good. We must have self-respect. Then may I wish to get the prize? May I wish to get to heaven? Is not that loving myself? I love myself enough to wish to get to heaven. Well then how is it? Is not it wrong to love myself? Haven't I just been saying self is a great monster? Must I like that monster? What shall we say? I will tell you. The way to be sure that you love yourself rightly, is to love everybody *as you love yourself*. That will balance things. If you obey that command you will be right. You must love yourself if you love everybody as yourself. Do you understand me? It is rather difficult. It is quite true that you may love yourself as much as ever you can, if you love everybody just as much as you love yourself. Try to do both.

I want you to consider some ways in which we are to do it—how we are to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'! Can you think of some ways in which you are to do it?

I. Now the first thing I shall say is this, I think we are very ready to forgive ourselves, if we have done anything naughty, and we are very tender to ourselves. When a person has just cut his finger, how tender he is to himself, how he pities himself. 'I have cut myself; I have hurt myself.' And if he has done something wrong, he soon says, 'It does not much matter'. He soon forgives himself. Don't you think that it is so? And perhaps we forgive ourselves a little too soon; and we are too tender to ourselves. I have seen a monkey, when wounded, hugging his own wound, and crying over it! And I have seen boys and girls do the same thing, when they have a little hurt; they pity themselves; cry over themselves. Now that is the first thing I should say, Do to one another the same, be *as tender to everybody, and as forgiving to everybody as you are to yourself*. Be tender and forgiving to everybody. Forgiveness is such a beautiful thing.

Shall I tell you what somebody says forgiveness is. He was asked, 'What is forgiveness?' and he said, 'It is the sweetest smell which a crushed flower gives'. There are some flowers if you trample upon them they give a sweet smell; and forgiveness is the sweet smell of a trampled flower. Do you like that thought? Forgiveness—the sweet smell of a trampled flower!

Some time ago—it was when we had slaves—we have no slaves now—it was in the West Indies, and there was a slave named Tom; he came from the north of Africa, he was a very good slave, and he became a Christian; and after he had been in his master's service some time, his master bought some more slaves, and amongst them was a poor little old man, an old black man, and when this old black man came, Tom looked at him very kindly, and smiled at him. It was wonderful how kind he was to this old slave. He gave him half his dinner, and let him share his bed, and when it was very cold, he would take him



out and put him in the sunshine; and when it was hot he would put him under the cocoa-nut trees. His master could not help noticing his conduct. 'How is it,' said he to Tom, 'you are so kind to that old man. Is he your father?' 'No, massa, no, I am sure he is not my father.' 'Perhaps he is your elder brother?' said his master. 'No, massa, he is not my elder brother.' 'Is he your uncle?' 'No, massa, he is not my uncle. He is no relation of mine. He has been no friend to me. *He has been my worst enemy.* He sold me to you. That is the man who sold me to be a slave. But I read, "Love your enemies!" therefore I forgive him on that account.' Be as tender and forgiving to others as you are to yourselves.

2. I will tell you another thing I find you are to do, if you 'love your neighbour as yourself'. *Go shares with him;* always go shares. It is a very good thing to do with everything you get; if it be something to eat, or something to drink, or something to play with, or a bit of knowledge—go shares, give some of it away. It is a good rule.

I think I told you about those two little noble-minded boys, who, when going through the streets of New York, a gentleman watching them heard one say to the other, 'Look here, Billy, aren't we in luck's way, here's half a peach, 'taint very dirty, you are the youngest, you shall have the first bite'. And little Billy was a modest little boy, so he took only a very little bite indeed; and the other boy said, 'Billy, bite bigger'. He let him have the largest share. He was a noble-minded boy.

3. The third thing I would advise you is this: *do not be a great friend to-day, and then a cold fellow to-morrow.* Keep steady to your friendships. I have known many boys, and a great many more girls, who, in school-time, are going to be friends for eternity, never going to forget one another; be such chums, such friends, nothing should separate them. By and by where are they? Where's so and so? They are not friends now. They have given it up. *Stick to your friends.* Go on with your friendships. If you wish others to do that to you, be a good close friend yourself. Be honourable.

Somebody has said something like this: 'Love is the morning, and friendship is the evening'. Do you understand it? Think of it. 'Love is the morning, friendship is the evening.' Which is best—love or friendship? Perhaps you and I should not think the same. Which is best?

There was a great man of the name of Elliott; he was a missionary to the Indians—a wonderful man! He spent his whole life in doing kindness to the Indians; and when eighty-one years of age, they found him one day in his bed—for he was obliged to keep his bed then, and a little black child was busy by his bedside, and Elliott was teaching this little black child his letters. Somebody wondered, and said, 'I wonder at you, old man, caring about teaching that little child his letters'. He said, 'I have loved them all my life, and I cannot do much now in

my bed, but I can teach a little child!' That was steadfast love. That was like Christ, 'Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end'. Take care your love is steadfast.

4. One more thing, and only one, about 'loving our neighbour as ourselves'. That is something like what I have already said—*care about another person's soul as much as you care about your own.* Do you want to go to heaven? Do you? Then 'love your neighbour as yourself,' and like him to go to heaven too. Do all you can to get him to heaven. If any good thought comes, pass it on. Always pass it on. Do good with it. Spread it to another; then he may become as good as you. What would have become of us in England now, if people had not laboured in the past to do us good? Pass it on. Do good to somebody.

*Don't be veneering.*—Do you know what 'veneering' is? It is when you put on some common wood some little pieces of precious wood, and cover it all over. Sometimes you see a deal table that has got a thin piece of rosewood or mahogany put over the deal, so that it all looks like rosewood or mahogany. The veneering is very beautiful, but very thin. It makes plain things look pretty for a time, but it won't last, it is not so good as the solid mahogany, or the solid rosewood. It only does for a time. Don't you veneer. Don't put on the surface. A great many people put on a surface of love. They smile so sweetly at you; they say, 'My love!' 'My darling!' such lots of loving words; but what is it all worth? Do they do anything really for you? Do they care for your soul? Does their friendship stick to you? Is it real? Don't veneer! Don't put on a surface of love. Let it be very deep. Perhaps you say, 'It is very difficult to do this, to love everybody'. So it is; but if your watch goes badly, if the hands do not go right, it is of no use your fumbling about with the hands, you must go inside, look at the mainspring; look at the works. The hands won't move rightly till you get the inward works all right; put them in order, and the hands will go all right. What is the inward work?

St. Augustine, that holy man, had a great friend. In one of his letters he says to him in Latin (I will give it to you in English), 'We are *glued together* by the blood of Jesus'. They were great friends, and when he would explain their friendship, he said, '*We are glued together by the blood of Jesus.*'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### PERSEVERANCE

'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.'—MATTHEW XXIV. 13.

ONE of the stories that Jesus told was this: 'Late one night a weary traveller came to a house where he was not expected, and his friend, having nothing in the house to give him, felt that he must find some food for the hungry man somewhere, even if he borrowed it. So he went next door, where, all in

darkness, he knocked as loudly as he could. And all he heard was a surly voice saying, "Oh, don't bother me; I am in bed, so go away". But he did not give it up. He knocked again, as loudly as a policeman does at our door if we leave a window open at night. He knocked so loudly that the man, not being able to sleep, came and gave him the leaves he asked for to give to his friend.

'So,' said Jesus, 'if you want to do a kind thing just as that man did for his friend, or if you want to do a good thing, do not let anything in the world discourage you. Try, try, try again.'

I read the other day a story, which I own that my own children do not appreciate very much, which seems to me to be a good one. A little Spanish boy who found it very hard work at school, ran away. He sat down by a well, and there he saw on the stone side of that well a furrow—a long mark—worn in the stone; it had been worn there by the slipping of the rope. That was all. And this boy said to himself, 'What! can that soft rope wear away that hard stone? And I thought that I could not do my work because it was hard. If I try I can learn anything.' And that boy went straight back and he became a great and famous Spaniard named San Isidore. Pegging away does it.

When you go to Switzerland to climb your first mountain, you will want to go very fast indeed to get to the top; won't you? Don't do it. The Swiss, who know, go very slowly, and they keep on and on. *That* is the best way to get to the top, not with great bursts.

Dr. Arnold, the great schoolmaster, said, 'The boys who get on in the world are not the boys with the most talents, but with the most energy'. To keep on, unceasingly on, that is the secret of living. Don't be ashamed whatever it is God has given you to do, or your duty bids you do. Don't be ashamed of it.

There was a boy from one of our big public schools being taken round a big store in London by his father, who was a General. They were going through the meat department when he said to his father, 'Father! there is Smith Primus from our school'. And there was a boy scrubbing away at a meat board for all he was worth. The General took in the situation in a moment, and went over to the boy scrubbing the meat board. 'Smith Primus, I believe, aren't you, of such and such a school?' 'Yes, sir,' he said. 'Then his face flushed up as he added, 'My father is going to give me his business, and I shall have to learn it from the start.' 'Well,' said the General, 'I hope you will dine with us at eight to-night. Will you?' And that was a good lesson to his boy, truly! Whatever you have to do, don't be ashamed of it. If it is scrubbing stones or meat blocks, do it in the best way you possibly can. That is the only way to do something better.

I had the pleasure of meeting a small boy who has a great aptitude for telling Scripture stories in his own way. He told me one of them about David—

how he was a little boy and one day his father said to him, 'Now, my boy, the shepherd is ill, and I do wish you would look after the sheep. It is a long, long way off, but you can saddle the donkey and go.' David was a good boy, and although it was so far away, he went. And in the bag he put ham sandwiches and beef sandwiches; and pears and bananas in the basket, you know. And David, just when he got where the sheep were, saw a lion seizing a little lamb. David was a brave boy, and he said, 'Here; just you leave that lamb alone, or I'll hit you with a stick'. And he killed that lion, and of its skin he made a rug for auntie's sofa in the drawing-room.

During the first American war there was an officer who had given to his men great balks of timber to move, and there were not enough men to do the work. And as they were striving, there came by a man of majestic appearance who saw that this officer was urging his men on whilst he stood by. 'You don't seem to have many men on the job!' 'No, there are not enough; we can't get any more.' 'Why don't you help a little yourself?' 'Me! Me! I am a corporal, sir!' 'Ah! I hadn't noticed that.' Then he got off his horse himself and helped to move those timbers until all was finished. And then he said to the corporal before he went away, 'Corporal, when you have any hard work, and not enough men to do it, you had better send to the Commander-in-chief. I will come again.' That was General Washington; and that is one of the reasons why they love him so in America. He was ashamed of nothing, where duty lay beside it. He put his best into what he did. And that is what you and I must do.

I have rather wandered from the line of the moral which I want to point out. It is a moral which was in Christ's own mind when He told the story. Suppose there is something wrong in your heart or in your life, suppose you have a sharp temper and you sometimes say bitter words, and you are ashamed of yourself afterwards and would like to cure yourself of the habit. Sometimes you pray and say, 'Oh! it's no good my praying. God won't give me a sunny temper. I did pray yesterday and He hasn't.' No! He cannot all at once. You must try yourself, and pray again and again. By and by, God doing His best and you doing *your* best too, you won't be unkind, you won't be bitter, you won't be naughty. But you must try and you must pray, *that* is what Christ said.—BERNARD J. SNELL, *The Good God*, p. 108.

### THE LESSONS OF WINTER

'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.'—MATTHEW XXIV. 20.

THE name *winter* is given to this season of the year on account of the prevalence of *winds* and storms.

The coldness of these dreary months is owing, in part, to the shortness of the days, or the time that the sun is above the horizon, and to the oblique direction in which his rays fall upon the portion of the globe where winter reigns.

In the torrid zone, as you know, there is no winter in the ordinary sense of the word; but a rainy season without ice, snow, or frost takes its place. This is also the case in tropical regions, both north and south of the equator.

One of the marked features of winter in our latitude is the *snow* which covers the face of nature with a beautiful white mantle. This is nothing more than the vapour of the atmosphere congealed by cold.

Snow-flakes often appear in most striking forms. Some of them, called *snow-crystals*, are extremely beautiful, and have engaged the attention of scientific men. When examined through a microscope, snow is one of the most wonderful things in nature, and after having scrutinised the pure, shining particles in this way, we can better appreciate the language in the Book of Job, where 'the treasures of the snow' are spoken of (xxxviii. 22).

There is, perhaps, nothing which strikes the native of a warm climate more forcibly, on passing his first winter in a colder region, than the sight of snow. You have all heard of the little girl from the East Indies who had been sent to England to be educated, and who, waking up one morning, and seeing the ground covered with this white sheet, clapped her hands in delight, declaring she had never seen so much sugar before! Wonderful, wonderful indeed are the works of God, and, as in the old hymn in the Prayer Book, called the *Benedicite*, we may well call on the frost and cold and the ice and snow, to praise and magnify Him for ever.

However disagreeable a very severe winter may be, in some respects it yet serves most important purposes. The sap retires from the extremities of shrubs and trees, and takes refuge in the roots, thus giving them a time to rest and recuperate.

The covering of snow which is spread over the earth protects the grass and the grain, and keeps all things which grow out of the ground snug and warm.

You would be astonished how much warmth there is in this snowy blanket; for it really deserves the name.

A few years ago a woman in Yorkshire was overtaken by a terrible snowstorm on the open moors, and was buried under the great drifts for forty-three hours. By keeping a little breathing place open above her head, she saved herself from suffocation, and, on the second day, a man crossing in the dreary region, espied a bonnet on the top of the snow, and came to her relief.

A more remarkable instance still was that of Elizabeth Woodstock. In the winter of 1799 she was returning on horseback from Cambridge to her home in a neighbouring village; and having dismounted for a few minutes, the horse ran away from her. At seven o'clock on a dreary winter evening, she sat down under a thicket, weary, chilled with cold, and completely disheartened. It soon began to snow, and being too weak to rise, she was obliged to occupy her uncomfortable seat on the frozen ground, and by the morning the snow had drifted up two feet above her

head. By a great effort, she tied her handkerchief to a little stick, and thrust it through the snow, partly for a signal for anyone who might chance to pass that way, and partly as a breathing hole.

The poor woman soon fell into a deep sleep, and day and night followed each other without her being conscious of anything, except that she now and then heard the church bells, and other familiar sounds. It was not until the eighth day that the handkerchief fluttering at the end of the stick was discovered, and the unhappy sufferer released. Her only substitute for food during that period was one single pinch of snuff.

You see, therefore, that a covering of snow is a pretty warm and comfortable one after all.

Those who are disposed to grumble when pinched by the cold of winter, would do well to think of the luxury which it secures for us in the shape of ice for the warm weather.

Moreover, the nipping frost kills off the myriad hordes of insects; dries up the seeds of infectious and deadly diseases; improves the blood, on which our very existence depends; and gives new vigour to the worn-out and wasted system. Consumptive patients are no longer sent to gasp and faint beneath the orange-groves of a debilitating southern clime, but uniform and invigorating cold weather is found much better for them.

Winter, besides being a *useful* season, is certainly a very *beautiful* one. The earth spread smoothly over with its white coverlid; the icy tracery of the trees; and the fantastic pictures which the frost draws on the window-panes—what could be more beautiful than these? The goodness of our Heavenly Father is plainly discovered in the provision which He makes for the lower orders of creation to protect them from the rigours of winter. The more delicate birds are instructed by their instincts to fly off to warmer latitudes. The creatures which are to remain behind need not go to clothing-stores for thick coats! The fur, and hair, and feathers on their bodies are made abundantly warm to protect them; and the colder the winter which is approaching, the better does their gracious Creator provide for them.

In the text, our Saviour was speaking of the awful calamity which was about to be sent upon doomed Jerusalem; its long siege by the Roman armies; and the famine and the pestilence which would follow. A flight in the winter would only be heightening the colouring of so terrible a picture. Hence the advice which He gives, 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter'.

Many of you will remember an instance of such a flight, which was disastrous in the extreme. In the autumn of 1812, Napoleon entered Moscow with 120,000 soldiers, intending to pass the winter in comfort. On the 13th October (three weeks earlier than it had ever been known before) snow began to fall. The proud Emperor looked out of his window in dismay, and decided to hasten back at once, and establish his winter quarters in the friendly cities of Poland.



It was a march through a dreary and desolate region of more than a thousand miles; but he put on a bold front, and the troops began to retire in good order. A week later, and the grand army was in full retreat. Bleak, chilling winds howled through the leafless trees; the weary soldiers were blinded by the flakes of snow and sleet; their embittered enemies attacked them in every unguarded point; order and discipline were forgotten; the ranks were broken, and each man struggled on as best he could; the dead and the dying were trodden down; hundreds of horses were slain for food; all ideas of conquest were banished; Napoleon himself left the army to its fate; and each day's weary march was marked by heaps of broken wagons, and abandoned cannon, and white hillocks of snow, beneath which the frozen bodies of man and beast were buried.

With such a dreadful picture of misery before you, it will be easy to understand the tender compassion which prompted the Saviour to say, 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter'.

The poets have taken delight in sketching scenes of home comfort during this season of frost and cold. Thus Cowper, in his old-fashioned way, exclaims:—

O Winter! ruler of th' inverted year,  
I crown thee king of intimate delights,  
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hour  
Of long uninterrupted evening know.

These, and other mercies, God has bestowed upon us, and the least we can do in return is to show our gratitude, not only with our lips, but in our lives.

Especially ought we to remember those who are suffering the sad privations of poverty, and be glad to relieve their wants when we are able. No one can claim to have the love of God abiding in his heart, who is willing to see a fellow-mortal destitute of food and clothing, and make no effort to help. The more merciful we are, the better shall we deserve to be called God's children.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 53.

### THE TEN VIRGINS

'Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.'—MATTHEW  
XXV. 2.

This marriage took place very long ago, and in a country far from here, and was not like any wedding you have ever seen.

It was a very grand marriage. The bridegroom was young and rich; the bride good and beautiful; the company was large; the banquet was splendid; and it was a great honour and a great pleasure to have an invitation.

In that country weddings always took place at night, and I will tell you the order of the ceremony. The bridegroom had all the boys and young men who were to be at the marriage collected at his house. He was gaily dressed, with a bright-coloured turban wrapped round his head, and above it a golden crown or a garland of flowers. When the sun went down, he and his companions set out to go to the bride's

house and fetch her home. They went along through the darkness, the boys carrying flambeaux, and a band of music playing before them.

The bride was waiting. She was crowned with a chaplet; her long hair flowed freely down her shoulders; her dress was white, scented with sweet perfumes, and bound at the waist with an embroidered girdle; and over her whole body there was flung an ample veil, which was the chief feature of a bride's attire.

When the bridegroom and his companions arrived at the house, she was ready to go with them; for the feast did not take place at the bride's home, as it does in this country, but at the bridegroom's. They conducted her along with music and joy; and half-way on the road the bridesmaids were waiting to join the procession. They carried in their hands lamps, without which no one was permitted to enter the house.

It is about these bridesmaids I am going to tell you.

There were ten of them. They did not live either in the town the bridegroom belonged to or in that where the bride lived, but in two villages which lay between them.

Three of them were sisters. They were overjoyed when they got the invitation to the marriage, for they loved both the bride and bridegroom very much, and were glad to hear of their happiness. They began to prepare a long time beforehand, getting their dresses ready and everything well arranged; for, they said, we must do everything we can to make it a bright day to our two friends. The eldest of the three sisters was tall and full-featured. Her eyes were large and full of repose, and her hair hung down her back in heavy golden curls. Nothing seemed ever to disturb or annoy her. She never took offence or spoke a spiteful word. She never seemed to think about herself at all, but always had smiles for everybody. She was the confidante of all her companions; and when children were hurt or other girls were in trouble, they always came to her. Everybody liked to be near her; for, they said, there was sunlight in her face. Her name was Love.

The second sister was very much attached to the eldest, and liked nothing better than to be near her and cling to her; for she was a timid girl, quiet and thoughtful. Often she would sit with her hands clasping her knees, and look into the fire or away over the landscape; but had you glanced at her eyes, you would have seen that it was not the fire or the fields she was seeing, but some inner vision that made her happy and solemn. She could not bear noise and bustle, but was fond of reading and thinking; and people used to say she did not live in this world, but in the inner world of her-own thoughts. Her name was Faith.

The third sister was the brightest of the three. She was not tall, like the others, but little and active. She had not the repose of her eldest sister, nor the shyness and thoughtfulness of the second.

She liked to be in a bustle and among people. She never could be idle a minute. Her fingers were always busy with something. She talked a great deal, in a clear, ringing voice; and her laughter fell continually like a merry cataract. She was demonstrative in her affection, and used to rally her second sister when she was timid and unhappy; for she always took a bright view of things. She visited a great deal; and people used to smile when they saw her nimble step hurrying along the street, and say she was ubiquitous. However gloomy the poor people she visited were when she came in, they were smiling before she went out, and thinking the world was not such a bad place after all. She was just a restless, darting, laughing beam of sunshine. Her name was Hope.

You might often have seen these three sisters all clinging together;—Love in the middle, with her peaceful look and large-hearted smile; Faith on the one side, clinging to her shoulder like a vine to a tree; and Hope on the other side, holding her hand, but with her bright eye full of some project she had in her mind.

It was Hope who had most to do in getting things ready for the marriage. She had a great time of bustle and work. But she would have forgotten ever so many things, in her hurry, if quiet Faith had not reminded her of them. One of these things was the lamps; and it was Faith herself who got them ready and filled them well with oil, putting some also into the little vessel which hung below each of the lamps to supply them if their own oil went done.

In the same village where these three sisters dwelt there lived other two of the bridesmaids, who were cousins. One of them was the shyest girl in the whole village. When she was going along the streets, she used to walk swiftly, with her eyes on the ground; and if anyone spoke to her, it made her blush and get confused. She never expected anybody to do anything for her or think about her; but was willing to serve every one, and believed everybody to be better than herself. Yet people thought a great deal of her, and were very willing to serve and honour her. She was glad to get an invitation to the marriage, yet terrified at the thought of appearing in so great a company. She kept thinking how she would be able to get into a corner, or hide behind somebody's back. Her wedding-dress was exceedingly plain; her hair was quite plainly combed down on her brows and tied in a knot behind; and she had not a single ornament. Yet somebody who saw her said she had the best of all dresses, for she was clothed with lowliness; and the best of all ornaments, a meek and quiet spirit. Her name was Humility.

Her cousin was very like her in appearance, and of the same size, only her features were pale, while those of Humility had a good deal of colour. She was sometimes called the lily-maiden. When her eyes were closed during the prayer in the synagogue, she almost seemed carved out of marble. There

never was a speck of dust on her clothes; and on wet days she seemed to have a miraculous power of keeping her very shoes clean. Her marriage-dress was of such spotless white that, when she appeared in it, it seemed to sparkle like snow. Her name was Purity.

On the morning of the marriage day, Faith, who knew both Humility and Purity well, for they were great friends, called to see if they were remembering their lamps, and brought some oil with her to put in the vessels, as they might have to wait long for the bridegroom.

At last the five set out together for the place where they had been appointed to wait. Their lamps shone brightly through the darkness; they talked about the bride and bridegroom, and were very happy as they went along, and sometimes they sang a hymn to shorten the road.

The other five bridesmaids lived in the other village. Two of them were sisters. One of the two was a pretty girl, with pink cheeks and blue eyes; but she knew it too well, and liked nothing better than to look at herself in the glass, turning herself round, and moving her head about to get different views. Her mother was sorry for this, and would not allow her to have a looking-glass in the closet where she slept. But she had an old broken one hidden there in her drawer, along with cheap ribbons and ornaments, which she used to stick all over herself in secret, and look at herself for an hour at a time. She was not a good scholar, never having patience to learn anything thoroughly. Her spelling and handwriting and arithmetic were wretched; but she could sing and play two or three pretty things, and was a good dancer, and she liked very much to show off these accomplishments. When she got the invitation to the marriage she was delighted, not because the bride and bridegroom were to be made happy—she never thought of that—but because she should have a new dress, and appear in so large a company, where she had no doubt she would be the admired of all admirers. And when she put on her new dress, she was so proud and pleased with herself that she actually went up to the glass, and, putting her lips to it, kissed her own reflection! Her name was Vanity.

Her sister was not a good-looking girl. Her face was thin and sallow, and her shoulders were high. She half-suspected this herself, but strove hard not to believe it, and was very angry when she thought about it. She was always criticising other girls, and speaking about their faults, and would never allow that any companion was good or beautiful. She was not glad when she saw others happy. She liked very much to hear stories about her companions, which she circulated industriously, always adding a little to them. When she heard of the marriage, she was angry with the bride for being married before her; and when pretending to praise her, secretly dropped suggestions which reminded everybody of her faults. Hearing who the other bridesmaids were, she thought

with anger of their beauty, and hoped they would not look well. Her name was Envy.

When starting for the place of meeting on the marriage day, Vanity was so engrossed with the thought of her own beauty, and Envy so annoyed with her own plainness—for her dress would not go on right, do what she would—that they snatched up their lamps hastily, with never a thought of whether they were well supplied with oil or not.

Next door to these two lived another of the bridesmaids. She was a pretty girl, with black eyes, a dark complexion, and crisp, curly hair. But there was something unpleasant about her mouth, and a sort of threatening look on her brow, as if a cloud were resting on it. She had a bad temper, and used on the slightest provocation to burst out crying and stamping, till her little body was convulsed with rage and her face made hideous with tears and passion. Sometimes she would sulk and refuse to speak for half a day, for no apparent reason whatever. People were afraid of her, and she often made those who loved her unhappy. On the very marriage morning she burst out into a rage because something went wrong when she was putting on her dress, and cried till her face was all swollen and stained with tears. She had to begin her dressing over again, and, after all, a big tear-drop fell on her pretty white dress. All this made her too late; and, in the hurry to get off, she quite forgot to put the oil in the vessel with her lamp. Her name was Anger.

The same mischance happened to the fourth bridesmaid, though her hurry was not due to the same cause. She was a tall, soft, sprawling girl. She was always too late. She was too late in getting up in the morning, too late in arriving at school; she never had her lessons ready in time. She had no order or neatness; her hair was always wrong, and her dress untidy. She used to go to sleep on Sabbath during service, and forget messages, and loiter everywhere. She was continually being scolded, but it did her no good. And on the marriage day she was true to her character; for her companions were all at the door waiting for her long before she was ready. Her name was Indolence.

One who came in to hurry her on I have not described yet. She was a strange-looking girl. When you looked at her, you saw that there was something wrong, but could not tell what it was. She had a stealthy step like a cat's, and an uneasy eye. Her lips were thin, and her brow low and narrow. She had two big jewels hanging in her ear; but if you had looked closely, you would have detected that they were sham ones; and the patch of red on her cheek was painted on. She delighted in inventing lies, and pretended to be what she was not.

It was with thinking of a made-up story about her father's wealth, which she intended to tell to those she met at the wedding, that she forgot the oil for her lamp. Her name was Falsehood.

These five all set out together. Their lamps were burning; they laughed and talked, but their words

were full of selfishness, spite, and lies. They met the other five at a cross-road, and all went on together; but the two companies could not amalgamate, for the second five were jealous of the others, and whispered among themselves.

When they came to the waiting-place, the parties separated a little from each other, and sat down each under a tree. It was late, and they began to get sleepy, but were resolved to stay awake. The first five, remembering that it was their usual time for evening prayer, knelt down together on the grass, and, with their arms round each other, committed themselves to God. But the others, seeing it, laughed at them. It grew very late, and they looked along the road, but still the procession did not come; and at last, after many efforts to keep awake, they all slumbered and slept.

At midnight their sleep was disturbed with the cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him'. They started to their feet, the flambeaux were flaring in the distance, the music playing, and the tramp of feet coming rapidly along. They seized their lamps, and, taking out the needle attached to them for the purpose, trimmed the wick. They found that they needed oil. Those that had brought it poured it out of the vessels into their lamps, so that they burned more brightly than ever. But whenever those that had none began to stir the wicks, the lights went out. They came running in consternation to the other five, crying, 'Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out'. With pitying looks these gazed for a moment in the terrified faces; but they could not help them, they had no more than enough for themselves. They could only tell them to hurry off and buy some. The procession was upon them: those whose lamps were burning joined it; the others shrank back, terrified and ashamed, out of sight. The light, the joy, and the music passed on, and they were left in the darkness.

What was to be done? They ran for a little in the direction of the nearest town. But soon their courage failed; they saw they would not be in time to make up with the procession.

Anger burst into a fit of tears and rage; Indolence flung herself on the ground and wept; Envy gnashed her teeth at the joy which had passed her by. But Vanity cried, 'I am sure they must let me in'; and Falsehood cried, 'I will tell a story which will induce them to let me in'.

So up they all started and ran after the procession. But it was very dark, and they stumbled and hurt themselves. Still they ran on, mad and weeping. At last they came in sight of the procession again. They saw the banqueting-house shining afar off; they could hear the music and the din of happy voices. They saw the door thrown wide, and there came rushing out a burst of welcome and song. The procession passed in. They cried, and shouted, and ran; but the hinges turned heavily, and with a crash the door was shut. The rest is told in this beautiful song:—



Late, late, so late, and dark the night and chill ;  
Late, late, so late, but we can enter still.—  
Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now.

No light had we, for that we do not repent ;  
And hearing this, the Bridegroom will relent.—  
Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now.

No light, too late, and dark and chill the night,  
Oh let us in, that we may find the light !—  
Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the Bridegroom is so sweet ?  
Oh let us in, though late, to kiss his feet !—  
No, no, too late, ye cannot enter now.

You know the meaning of this story. That banquet is in heaven. We are invited to it, every one of us. We should all like to sit down at that eternal marriage feast. But the vain and arrogant, the selfish and envious, the false and the bad-tempered, cannot enter there. It is only for those possessed of faith, and love, and hope, and for the humble and pure. Are you not ready yet? Can you recognise your own portrait among those of the foolish virgins? Do you feel that faith, love, and hope, humility and purity, are not in your soul yet? Then call on God to make you ready.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 51.

#### ON TRIMMING LAMPS

‘Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.’—  
MATTHEW XXV. 7 (with PSALM CXXI. 105).

I. The lamp spoken of by the Psalmist is **The Word of God**. How dark would the world be without it! The great difference between us and the heathen is that we have this light, and they have not. We rejoice in the light which God has graciously given in His Word; whereas they despairingly sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. To all who have accepted it, it is a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path. That lamp has gladdened the hearts and brightened the lives of many present. It has shown us how dearly God must love us; how near the loving Saviour is to aid, guide, and save us; how all our friends are the gifts of God, and all the love that our dear parents have towards us is derived from the Source of all love—our Heavenly Father’s heart. Others need this same glad news. Then

Shall we, whose souls are lighted  
By wisdom from on high—  
Shall we, to men benighted,  
The lamp of life deny?

II. If we are to keep this light burning brightly for our own guidance, and also for the benefit of others, we must ever **Keep it Well Trimmed**. God in olden times attached great importance to trimming the lamps in the sanctuary. There were men set apart for that special duty. The fire with which the wick was kindled in that temple was God’s sacred fire, yet even that could burn brightly only when, in addition to sufficient oil being supplied, the wick was kept clean.

In the other verse which we have read, ‘all those

virgins’—even the foolish who had neglected taking sufficient oil with them—realised the great importance of having their lamps trimmed for meeting the bridegroom. I will not dwell now upon the great folly of the foolish virgins in neglecting to obtain sufficient oil. I want to call your attention to what even they, notwithstanding their folly, thought a very important duty—*Trimming their lamps*.

Now God has given to us the lamp of truth, and kindled it from off His own altar; all that we have to do is to keep it burning brightly. They had no lamps in the streets of Eastern cities, but each one had to carry his own lantern through those dark winding passages. David refers to this, or possibly to a traveller crossing an uninhabited tract of country at night, needing a lamp to trace his path and to guide his footsteps. There is a story told of a man crossing a mountain—in Carnarvonshire, I think—on one stormy night. It was so cold that the man, in order to shelter his hands from the biting wind, put the lantern under his cloak, and as the moon shone dimly through the clouds he thought he could trace his way without the lantern. All at once a gust of wind blew aside his cloak; the light shone forth and suddenly revealed the edge of a large slate quarry, over which, in another moment, he would have fallen and have been dashed to pieces. He soon retraced his steps, but he did not hide the lantern under his cloak that night again. Ah! there are many who think that they can go through life—dark and dangerous as the way often is—without this lamp of God’s Truth; they therefore hide it out of sight, or neglect to trim it by constant and prayerful study. In many instances they do not find out their mistake and folly until it is too late. Others have had this light unexpectedly cast upon their path, to reveal to them some great danger; thus their steps have been suddenly arrested, and they have learnt never to try to do without that light again.

Finally, children must watch and pray that as they advance in life, and miss the training they once had from parents, they shall keep their lights still burning for God. He who was *the Word of God, and the Light of the World*, said to His disciples, ‘Ye are the light of the world’. If our hearts and lives are kindled with love and truth by His Spirit, we too shall be worthy of that name. ‘What if this light were to go out?’ asked a visitor one dark night of the watchman of the lighthouse off Calais. ‘Why,’ replied the man, ‘if for one brief hour that light were to go out, many vessels would be wrecked and precious lives lost, and from all parts of the world for months to come the news would return that at such an hour the light off Calais was not burning. Sir, lives and property, the character of this lighthouse and my character are all at stake: *as long as I am here that light shall burn*.’ May that be our resolution throughout life, God helping us!—  
DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, p. 113.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

MATTHEW XXV. 14-30.

THE Lord is the Lord Jesus: the far country is heaven: the departure is Christ's ascension: and the return to all is His second coming, and to each the day when His work ends: the 'long time' of the master's absence means that Christ would not at once return in glory, as many in the early Church expected: the servants are all who profess to be Christ's, whether true or false: the master's goods embrace everything with which we can serve Christ on earth.

Or, if we think that this parable is specially for the teachers and rulers of the Church, we may say that the goods are the word and Gospel of Christ, which we are not only to defend but also to extend, not only to preserve but also to propagate by the winning of souls. The whole parable is fitted to fill us with the dread of uselessness.

**I. Our Talents.**—Money and power of mind are often called talents, and a famous scholar is said to be very talented or to have great talents. But the grandest talent is not money or scholarship, though both of these are of great use in the Service of Christ. It is not something in your head or hand, but something in your heart. It is your spirit, your life, your power of knowing, loving, and serving God and the Saviour. God has put into your hands, without your choice, the sacred trust of an immortal spirit, and you can never lay it down.

In some ways the young are the most talented. Youth has its five talents, middle age its two, and old age but the one. When a war-ship is sinking, our sailors march out of the jaws of death into the boats in 'funeral order,' as it is called, the youngest first, and the oldest last. The reason is that the youngest carry with them more talents than the rest, and are worth more to their country. Don't say, then, 'I am only a child; what can a child do?' What can a child not do? You have a great God-given capacity for religion. You live in a Christian land. God's grace and Spirit are within your reach, and your talent is not yet lost or wasted, for its bulk is not broken. The Bible respects and prizes you because you have so many talents. Angels rejoice over the conversion of a child as men rejoice who find great spoil, for they know that you can be profitable to God. But life is short, and the art of serving Christ is long and difficult; therefore begin at once, and be thankful that you have not to begin trading without capital.

**II. The Two Good Servants.**—**1. They agree with their master's views.**—They are like him intellectually, and accept all his ideas. They agree with him in thinking that they are his servants. They agree with him about the use to be made of his goods. Thus Christ's true people count themselves His servants and the guardians of His interests during His absence. They regard His goods as a talent, an honourable trust, a great responsibility. They are glad that they are not degraded into nobodies, and

that they are not licensed to be idle, but that they are to trade with the Lord's money. Their lives are shaped by Christ's mind and will.

**2. They have a fine spirit.**—They love their Lord and His service. Each of them can say, 'Mine and Thine are the same; all mine is Thine, and all Thine is to me as if it were mine.' They thus put their heart and life into their trading. Working for Christ is their proper trade, to which they are apprenticed; it is their end of ends, all else being as a by-job, a sort of eddy at the side of the main current of their life. Thus they trade with zeal, and each of them is what an old writer was called a 'labour-lover'.

**3. They were richly rewarded.**—Christ likes well the way and work of His true-hearted servants, and His grace says 'well done' to that which the rigour of the law would condemn, and which, I dare say, the faithful ones condemned themselves, as they considered 'the petty done, the undone vast'. 'Well done' is His word; not well begun, not well intended, not well learned, not well exercised, but 'well done'. The doing is the crown and proof of all the rest. 'Good and faithful servant,' not great and famous, not able and successful servant.

'I know I should believe all the words of Christ,' I once heard Dr. John Duncan saying, 'but, gentlemen, there are some words of Christ which I do not yet see how I ever can believe. These are His words in the last day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant". My poor bungled work is not well done.' Is He as 'an hard man,' who gave the two (apparently) all they had gained, and their capital too, and His praise, and an eternal share in His own glory? How men wrong Christ with their little thoughts!

**III. The Bad Servant.**—We must not make him worse than he was. He professed the true religion, and was at pains not to lose his one talent, and wished to be good. 'He went, and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.' He did not rob his master like the Unjust Steward, he did not waste all he had like the Prodigal Son, he was not openly wicked like the thief on the cross. Like those decent church-goers who never inquire what their talent is, and how they may use it well, he was very selfish and slothful. That was his double sin. As he buried his talent in the earth, so he buried his spirit in his lazy body. Like every self-seeker, he deemed his master a self-seeker also.

Your life will be made up of the service of man and the service of God, and this parable gives you the secret of these two services. Christ here praises and ennobles the true service of man. 'There is no fear of him,' a merchant once said to me when I asked him about one of his clerks; 'he is a perfect servant. He is as much interested in my business as if it were his own.' He had the spirit of the two servants in the parable. The boy who does most for his master in this spirit does most for himself. He is kept from a thousand temptations; he is strong, glad, and healthy-hearted, and is on the highway to true

success. He is more likely than his selfish neighbour to become a Christian, and the mood in which he serves his earthly master will help him to serve his Master in heaven.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 331.

### THE MAN WITH ONE TALENT

'And unto one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.'—MATTHEW XXV. 15.

I THINK we have always a kind of pity for the poor fellow who received only one talent. Does there not seem to be some sort of favouritism on the part of the master in this story, who gave some of his servants five talents, and gave only one talent to another? Might not the poor fellow who had but one talent have done far better if, like his brother-servant, he had been entrusted with five talents?

I. Now, it is very clearly explained to us *why* the master gave more to one and less to another. We are told that he gave to every man 'according to his several ability'. That is, he knew exactly the ability of each of these servants, and he gave to each one the amount which that one had the ability to use. One man had shown himself able to manage more of the property than the other. This other man had shown himself, in the way in which he did his work, not capable of doing very much on a large scale, though fitted to do a little. So it was from consideration and tenderness that the master gave five talents to the one who had the ability to use so large a sum, and only one talent to the man who had not the ability to use more.

II. What do we mean by a talent? When this parable was spoken by our Lord, a talent meant a certain sum of money; but now, when we no longer have sums of money called talents, we have taken the word from this very parable, and we use it to express what the 'talents' in the parable represent. If I say a boy or girl has a 'talent for music,' or a 'talent for languages,' what do I mean? Of course I imply that that boy or girl has a gift for music or for languages—has an ease and facility in learning music or languages which does not belong to everybody. So we have come to apply the word 'talent' to express those gifts of mind which God has given us. To some God has given several gifts or talents, to another only a few, to another only one. But you may be quite sure that in every case He has, in love and wisdom, given each just the talent which he or she is able to employ. I dare say many of us often think, 'Oh! if only I was in some other condition in life; or if I had some other disposition, some other nature, some other talent, I would do better'. Or we think it is easy for that person to lead a useful and true life, for he is so talented—has so many gifts of mind and spirit. Now, all these thoughts are wrong. The question at the last great day—and on every day in our coming life when we think seriously of these things—will not be how many or what kind of talents have I? but how have I used

the talent, if it be only one, which the Great Master entrusted to me?

III. Unused talents! Oh! what a long, sad history might be written of these! What a terrible thing it is to look back even upon two or three years of useless life! Your talent may seem a little one. Never mind; use it. You don't know what wonderful results may follow from it. A common match when you strike it gives a small flame indeed; a man lights a taper from that, and then with the taper he lights the great lamp in the lighthouse; then it shines out through glasses that increase its brightness, and some ship out at sea, with the storm pelting on it, steers by the welcome light on into the harbour and is safe. You never know what the smallest deed may lead to. You never know what may be lost by allowing the gift God has given you—the pity, the tenderness, the wealth, the talent for anything—to lie unused.

Some years ago a well-known traveller found a vase near some mummies in Egypt. It was tightly sealed up. He sent it home to the British Museum, and there, one day, when it was broken open, there were found inside it some hard, dry wrinkled beans. These had probably been there for three thousand years. They may have been some of the very seeds of the great harvest which Joseph had caused the people to treasure up against the years of famine. They were quite old enough to be so. On the 4th of June, 1844, they were planted under a glass, and they grew! Now, just imagine, if on that day three thousand years ago, instead of having been sealed up in that vase, they had been planted, and the seed they bore planted again, and so on through the years since, how many myriad miles of wonderful harvests might these seeds have been bearing to-day!

So it is with the seeds of truth and love which we try to sow in your hearts. They may abide alone, lie useless in the dry chambers of your memory, or they may be used and produce harvests which shall one day wave in their golden glory in the Eternal Sunshine.—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 111.

### THE TALENTS AND THE POUNDS

'And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.'—MATTHEW XXV. 15.

THIS parable, you know, immediately follows that of the Ten Virgins. There the virgins are represented as *waiting* for their Lord; here the servants as *working* for Him. And the order is meant to teach us this, that it is no use trying to work for Christ among others, unless we are waiting for Him in our own hearts.

We must always take this parable and that of the Ten Pounds in St. Luke together. They are not only different in themselves, but they were spoken at different times, and to different sets of persons. St. Luke's was delivered in our dear Lord's last going up to Jerusalem, but before His entry into the city on



Palm Sunday; and it was spoken to the multitude, 'because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear'—the Apostles probably thought so themselves. No; that kingdom would come, would come gloriously at last; but many a long century had first to pass by, many a suffering to be borne, many a brave act of love to be done by the Church first. And the servants were not to sit idly waiting their Lord's return. His command—His fitting command—to His servants is exactly what He says to all of you now: *Occupy till I come*. Make the best use of all the powers, all the advantages, all the help I give you, while I am absent, that so, at my return, I may receive mine own with usury, and you may inherit the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The other parable was spoken to the Apostles, and to them alone, while He sat on the Mount of Olives on the Tuesday in Holy Week. We shall hear more about this presently.

'Unto one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his ability.' You know, that that is true of you. One never can go into a school of any kind, without being reminded of this parable. Some of you are cleverer than others; some of you have had greater advantages before you came here; some of you have better health and more strength. And one other talent God—who foresees all things—has given to each one of you differently, though how, and how differently we shall not know in this world—I mean, longer or shorter life. But by your talents more or less, still it is, 'Occupy till I come'. I hope that some of you, at all events, have been trying to keep that in mind during the last half-year; that you have been trying to do your best in your lessons of whatever kind; that when you go out into life, you may be able to do Him the better service who may come at any moment, and who certainly will come at last. Then it matters comparatively little who has the five talents, who the two, who the one. Whichever of you it may be that has the one, I earnestly pray that, when her Lord calls her, that beautiful verse of one of our poets may be true of her:—

His virtues walked their narrow round,  
Nor missed a space, nor left a void;  
And sure the Eternal Master found  
The single talent well employed.

St. Philip, the slowest of all the Apostles, will not sit on one of the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, less than St. Paul, the ablest of them.

I. Notice that in St. Luke they all receive the same. So the two parables put together teach two different lessons, which could not so well be taught in one story only: that of the Talents; that as our dear Lord has given us, so He will expect from us; that to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; that of the Pounds; that with the same powers, different persons, even among God's true servants, will make, some more, some less, use;

and that he who makes the most of what he has here shall have the higher reward there. One star, you know, differeth from another star in glory.

II. See something else. Why in one parable do we read of talents, in another of pounds? A talent of silver was worth two hundred and forty-three of our pounds. A pound of silver was worth four of our pounds. The difference between what the first servant received in St. Matthew, and all in St. Luke, is therefore enormous: the one had £1215, the other only £4. Now, as we saw just now, the parable of the Talents was spoken to those Apostles on whom He bestowed greater graces and gifts than on any other of His servants; to them, therefore, He speaks of talents. The parable of the Pounds was spoken to the common multitude, to whom He had given His common gifts only, and to them He therefore speaks of pounds.

III. The next thing is that the Lord of those servants straightway took his journey. Here the parable does not keep quite close to the order of things. The Lord first, you see, gives his gifts and then departs; *our* Master first departed on Ascension day, before He sent down His gifts on Whitsunday.

In St. Luke, where the master was a nobleman, gone to receive for himself a kingdom, we have something else. His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us'. Now, we may sometimes learn a great truth from the writings of a wicked man. A certain infidel, trying to turn the parable into ridicule, says: 'Why, what a fool this nobleman must have been—if he was in such danger from his fellow-citizens—to give his servants pounds instead of swords!' Exactly. That is the way in which the world looks at the question. That was the way St. Peter looked at it before the day of Pentecost, when he drew his sword and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. But we know, or ought to know, that it is *still, quiet* work that our Lord chiefly demands from us. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

Well, two of the servants went and traded with their lord's money. Let us leave them for the present to what—we all know it—must be a work of time; to their being instant in season and out of season; to their ever remembering that great and strict account that they would some day have to render. Now, as to him that had received the one talent. Take the two parables together. The one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money: the other laid it up in a napkin. In the first place, this beautifully comes in with the story. A talent was far too large a mass of silver to be concealed in a napkin. If it were to be hidden at all, it could only be so hidden by being buried. But there is a far deeper meaning than this. The talent was hidden in the earth—that is, the gifts God gives such and such a man are employed about the things of this earth: the cares of this world, and deceitful-

ness of riches, to quote our dear Lord's words in another place. But the pound was delicately, softly laid up in a napkin. And this refers more precisely to that which is so common a temptation to girls. St. Paul says to St. Timothy, 'Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ'. Now, when any of you allow yourselves to lie in bed to the very last moment, because it is so very comfortable, thereby perhaps giving up altogether, or anyhow shortening, your morning prayers—if any of you in the winter, when the time has come for some active duty, won't get away from lingering over the fire, because, you know, it is so very cold; if any of you, engaged in reading a story, won't lay it aside at the exact time, because, 'anyhow, I'll just finish this chapter'—this is not enduring hardness, this is laying up your pound in a napkin. And yet notice that the account of the servant went far beyond this. By reason of the frailty of our mortal nature, we cannot always stand upright. He did not, just now and then, lay that pound aside. His own words were, 'Lord, behold, here is thy pound which I have kept'.

And see the two faithful servants go out, as it were, to meet him. This is what St. John means, where he says, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment'. This is what St. John's blessed Master means when He says, as we have so lately heard, 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh'.

And next compare the speech of the servants as given in St. Matthew with that in St. Luke. In St. Matthew it is, 'Behold, I have gained'. In St. Luke, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained'. Is not this exactly what St. Paul tells us where he says, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me'?

IV. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' It has been very beautifully said that here on earth, when we are happiest, joy enters into us as wine into a glass or bottle; there we shall enter into joy as a ship into the boundless sea.

Then, hanging back to the last, comes the slothful servant. And he begins with an excuse: 'Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed'. Let us first understand his words. The first part, 'reaping where thou hast not sown,' is clear enough. The last means this: gathering in the grain on the barn floor, which thou hadst not *winnowed* out. See how he not only tries to excuse himself, but throws the blame on his lord. Was it not so in the first excuse ever made in the world? Hast thou eaten of the tree? Adam not only throws the blame on his wife—The woman gave me of the tree; but he casts it partly on God—The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me; as much as to say—If Thou hadst not given me Eve, I should not have fallen into this sin.

'Lo, there thou hast that is thine.' Nay, not

so. His lord had indeed what once was his, but what ought to have been his now? All that that talent might have brought him in was due to him exactly as much as that first original talent. But it is much more than so. It could scarcely have been taught in this parable; but we know how true it is. In the dreadful day of judgment no man will be able to say: These, Lord, are my talents. It is true, I have done no good with them; but neither have I done any harm. If you have not done good, you must have done harm. Our Christian life is not like ascending a mountain, where, if you sit down to rest, though certainly you are not getting on, neither are you going back. No; it is like a man rowing on a swift stream, and *against* the stream. If he leans on his oars, he does not make way manifestly; but is that all?—no; he is drifting down.

There is an Eastern allegory which sets out this truth very beautifully. A man who was about to take a long journey had two sacks of corn. He gave them into the charge of two friends—one to one, one to the other—requesting these friends to take care of them for him. In due time he came back. Going to the first friend, he said, 'Where is my corn?' 'All safe,' he answers; 'I tied up the mouth, and put it in a cellar. Take it again.' It was brought out and opened; and there it was, mildewed, rotten, and utterly worthless. He went to the second, 'Where is my corn?' 'Come out with me, and I will show you.' He took the man into a field all waving with golden wheat: 'There is your corn'. Then said the owner to the first friend, 'Take your reward; the sack of mildewed wheat you gave to me'. To the second, 'Give me back one sack of corn when the grain is thrashed out, and all the rest is your own'.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 9.

#### 'SEMPER FIDELIS'—ALWAYS FAITHFUL

'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'—MATTHEW  
XXV. 21.

THE motto which I have selected to read with my text to-day was given by Queen Elizabeth to the city of Exeter. The people of that ancient city naturally place great value upon it. They could not receive a higher commendation from their sovereign than this.

We all value fidelity, and none of us would be considered faithless. It is wonderful what opportunities there are for faithfulness in all directions, and how often it is to be found in directions where we should least expect it. The lower animals, even the beasts of the forest, often show very striking fidelity to each other. How often the parent risks its life, and even sacrifices it, in defence of its young or of its mate. Then when we come to domesticated animals, what an amount of fidelity we find? How faithful, for instance, is the dog! That is perhaps the chief reason why we like him. My nation—the Welsh—love to record the fidelity of Prince Llewellyn's dog, the noble Gelert. Every Welsh child knows how he protected the royal infant and killed the wolf that came to

devour it, having first of all turned the cradle over the child to protect it from the wolf. It is true that at first Llewellyn mistook the situation, and seeing blood all over the nursery concluded that Gelert had killed the child, and in a moment of mad despair plunged his sword into Gelert's heart. But when the brave dog was dead at his feet, ill-requrited for his noble service, and he saw the wolf's mangled body in a corner of the room, and, turning over the cradle, found his child asleep, the brave prince was fit to break his heart. He could not restore that life, or say one kind word to Gelert—it was all too late for that; but he gave him honourable burial, erected a stone, and on it a record of faithfulness, over Gelert's grave. And still Bedd-Gelert (or Gelert's Grave) is a well-known and oft-frequented spot. As men cut a twig from the tree that keeps vigil over that grave, and take it to their homes as a memento, they do all in honour of the memory of a faithful dog. Faithfulness, even in a dog, is a noble thing.

Then, when we come to men, women and children, fidelity is specially prized. We do not think much of anyone who is not faithful. A faithless one is despised and avoided, although he may be gifted in other directions. The first thing necessary in the character of a servant, or workman, is that he is faithful, and therefore trustworthy. The soldier who forsakes his regiment is branded as a deserter and submitted to humiliating punishment. He is despised by all who see him because he has been faithless to his country. In every position 'it is required that a man be found faithful'. The closer the relationship the more importance do we attach to faithfulness. I am told that in Exeter people value so highly their motto *Semper Fidelis* that they not uncommonly have it engraved on wedding rings. It was this faithfulness that is referred to so tenderly in a familiar song, 'Darby and Joan':—

Always the same to your old wife Joan.

There is another equally familiar and tender song that ends with the words:—

John Anderson, my jo, John, we clamb the hill thegither,  
And mony a canty day, John, we've had wi' ane anither.  
Now we maun totter down, John, but han' in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson, my jo.

Then again, how sweet it is to see brothers and sisters faithful to each other. I remember some years ago that all Bristol was thrilled with the story of two children being lost in a neighbouring wood. The two were out all through a cold wintry night, and when found in the morning the younger child was alive, for the elder one had taken off her dress and wrapt it round the child, and thus had saved its life, although by so doing she had sacrificed her own—for she lay dead by the side of her loving charge. What could be more pathetic than that sight? And who could help shedding a tear over the body of that brave, devoted, and faithful sister.

But, above all, Jesus expects us to be faithful, and rewards with His own approval and blessing all those

who are faithful to Him. The city of Exeter may well be proud of its motto, for it was given to it, as a reward of its faithfulness, by Royal hands. But far greater than the approval of even Queen Elizabeth is the approval of Jesus our Lord and King. There is a very fine painting by Sir Noel Paton, in which a young Roman lady is represented as refusing to put one grain of incense upon Caesar's altar. It was a touching sight, for her young lover looked anxiously at her, hoping that for the sake of saving her precious life—yea, and for his sake—she would cast but one grain upon the altar; but no, not to save her life, nor yet for her lover's sake, would she do it: but for Christ's sake she would suffer a martyr's death. Oh, with what a welcome she was received into her Lord's joy! And to each of us He exclaims, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life'. May our motto in Christ's service ever be, '*Semper Fidelis*'—'*Always Faithful*'.—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks with Men, Women, and Children*, p. 280.

### AN INHERITANCE IN HEAVEN

MATTHEW XXV. 34.

THERE is just one drawback to our joy in the possession of the inheritance of which I spoke to you in the last chapter. We must one day leave it. There is no such drawback to the second inheritance I am to tell you of now. This is that inheritance 'reserved in heaven,' into which God's children enter when they die, and in which they remain for ever.

By what rich names it is named in the Bible! It is the heavenly country, the city of God, the new Jerusalem, whose streets are gold, the many mansions in the Father's house, and Paradise. Every child who loves God is an heir of this country. It belongs to him now, although his eyes cannot see it. It is to that country he will be carried when he dies.

How shall I describe to you the grandeur of this better land, as it is set before us in the Bible? Earth has nothing so fair, so real, so good. It is the home of goodness and of truth.

When Joshua was describing the good land to which God had brought the children of Israel, he said, 'It is a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass'.

But the good things in the heavenly country are different from these. They are things that belong to the soul. They are the things that give pleasure to God. Innocence and peace and joy and truth and love in the hearts of the people of the country; these are some of the good things. And the throne of Christ is there. And Christ Himself. And those who live there have His friendship, and meet Him and serve Him every day.

It was to gather citizens for that country that Jesus came down from heaven. By His churches



and ministers He is gathering citizens for it still. The citizens He gathers are the best, the most loving, the truest of mankind. The fighters for God, the speakers of the truth, the helpers of the poor are there. So are the souls whose sins have been forgiven. Many who were poor on earth are rich; and some who were slaves. In heaven they are rich and free and happy. It is the country of those who have been on God's side, and have been soldiers in His armies and workers in His workfields. The holy men and women of whom we read in the Bible are there. And the prophets and singers of psalms, and the disciples who followed the Lord upon the earth. And the Apostles who spoke for Him after He went back to heaven. Mary, the mother of Jesus; Elizabeth, the mother of John; the poor woman who broke her box of ointment and poured it on His feet; and Dorcas, who made little coats for widows and orphans; and the Elect Lady and Gaius, who opened their homes to the travellers who went about preaching the Gospel; they are all there. And the missionaries of our own time who have gone to heathen countries to turn their people to God: Robert Moffat, Henry Martyn and Bishop Mackenzie, David Livingstone and William Burns, the missionary to China, and thousands more whose names I do not know. They are all there.

It is a rich, fair land, filled with things rich and fair, and with people whose hearts are filled with the love of God, and who love their neighbours as themselves. There is no quarrelling there. There is no envy. There is no hatred. It is a country where the people are of one mind and one heart. They strive to help each other, and serve the Lord who died for them, all they can.

And you, my dear boy, and you, my dear girl, if you love God, are heirs of this happy land. It is yours now. But you will enter it and be happy in it more fully when you die.

People—even the people of God—do not think of this inheritance as often as they should. The beauty and sweetness of God's gifts to us in our earthly country blind our eyes. We are placed here in a world so fair that we do not care to think of the world in heaven that is fairer far. It is often only when trouble and sorrow descend upon us that we turn our thoughts to the better land. But it is one of the blessings of trouble that it inclines our heart to think of it. Many and many a time since the world began there was no comfort for the children of God except the vision of that better land.

The thirteenth century was a very wicked time in Europe. Troops of lawless soldiers went about overturning and destroying and working cruelty. The roads and woods were infested with robbers. The poor were trampled. No one was safe. No one was happy. Good people had to hide themselves in houses of prayer to escape from the robbers. And it seemed to many that the end of the world was at hand.

In that dreary time arose two men of the same

name who, looking through the awful gloom and misery, had a clear vision of the better country, and called on men and women to seek after it. The one was a poor monk, who lived in a cell at Cluny; the other was a great man, a ruler of monks, who lived in a great house at Clairvaux. Bernard was their name.

What Bernard of Cluny saw, as he peered through the darkness, was heaven itself. He saw it in glorious colours, all golden, all joyous, with Christ and the holy angels, and filled with holy men and women.

But what Bernard of Clairvaux saw was better still. It was the King of the fair, heavenly land. It was the dear Saviour who died for us. What he saw was the Person of Jesus. He saw the head that was crowned with thorns, and the feet that were pierced with nails, and His hands and His side.

And each of them put what he saw into a hymn.

The poor monk who had only a cell to live in made the hymn you have so often sung:—

Jerusalem the golden!  
With milk and honey blest:  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed.

I know not, oh, I know not  
What joys await us there,  
What radiance of glory,  
What light beyond compare.

The rich Abbot of Clairvaux saw just that glory, and fixed his great heart on Jesus Himself:—

Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,  
Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Thy blest name,  
O Saviour of mankind.

I hope days so dark as those in which the two Bernards lived may never again come to the earth. But if, as you go forward in life, a time of sorrow should come to you, do not forget this better country in heaven.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 212.

#### A MAN ON A CROSS WHO FOUND GOD

MATTHEW XXVII. 38 ff.

I HAVE been speaking to you about the finding of God, and you will remember I promised to tell you of one who found Him in the shadow of death. And now I have to tell you it was the Thief on the Cross I had in my mind. And what I want to show you about him is, not only that he found God, but also the way by which God led him to Himself. This is the story I am to open up to you this evening.

Of the man's previous history we only know what is to be gathered from his own words and from the circumstances in which we find him. He was one of two men who were thieves and who were put to death when Jesus was. To look at, he did not seem to differ from his companion. No one could say that

the one was that day to find God and the other not. He was a thief, just as his neighbour was. And there would be in him and about him all that habit of thieving puts into a man, or draws up out of a man. There would be scorn of law, lawlessness; there would be coarseness and perhaps brutality. He was really a thief: a man who belonged to the thieving class. A poor, miserable form of a man. If you could enter a criminal court when the judges are sitting and see the people who come up to be tried, you would see the kind of man this was. Idleness and debasement are written on their very faces, and on their looks and movements and words and deeds. They are like a sheet of paper written all over with evil signs. The thief on the cross was just one of that class: a man acquainted with gaols and chains and whipping-posts. A miserable creature. A thief. That and nothing more.

But no. I recall that word. He was something else besides a thief. He was a man, with a man's nature, with a man's wishes, with a man's heart. His face, although crime had put its bad marks upon it, once nestled on a mother's breast. Beneath the wretched form of his thieving life lay a real human story—a story of love and sadness, of tears and sins; a story that might have been of a different and better kind if he had had the advantages you and I have had—if he had had the half of our chances.

The first thing, then, in this story is that he was a man who had lost his way, who had got into bad ways, had fallen among bad companions, and was now an outcast and a thief. By his own confession he was an unjust man, justly condemned to die.

But the next thing which I have to mention to you is the surprising joyful fact that thief though he was, and bad though he was, he was still related to God, that God was remembering him, and that it was in the heart of God to bring this lost soul to Himself before the day was ended.

I have no words good enough to say how good this second fact seems to me. It is the everlasting wonder of the Gospel, the mercy and pity of God for sinners, the heart of God yearning to bring sinners back to Himself. God knew the man's badness better than anybody else did. He also knew how bad his badness was. But He also knew that although he was bad, and very far gone in badness, he yet was neither a monster in human shape, nor a fiend, but a man, the work of His own hands, a man with a lost soul, a man sorely needing to be saved. To tell the story rightly I must take you back to the day when the Lord Jesus was put to death. I take you back to the old city of Jerusalem, in which the death took place—the city over which Jesus wept, and which only a few days before He had entered as a King. And I want you to follow me along the streets of Jerusalem, beginning at the door of Pilate's judgment hall.

It is morning. Three prisoners are brought forth by soldiers to be led to the place of execution. Each has been beaten with the cruel scourge. Each, weak

though he be with the scourging, has to carry the crossbeam of the tree on which he is to die. A procession is formed; the soldiers and prisoners begin to move. There is the usual crowd on the sidewalks. The day is hot; the air is stifling. One of the three prisoners is the thief whose story I am about to tell. He has his own sorrow that day; but he is struck by the demeanour of one of his companions. He notices as the procession advances and this companion comes into view that there is a murmur among the crowd. He sees that He is not like a common criminal. He observes that He is silent. But ever as they advance he catches words spoken about Him by the crowd. One said, 'This is the man who called himself a King'; another, 'That is He who said He was the Messiah'; a third, 'There is the man who said to Pilate, "I was born to bear witness to the truth"'. And a fourth said to his friend by his side, 'Behold the man who put His trust in God and said He could build the Temple in three days if it were thrown down'. Other words, more wonderful still, fell on his ear. One who was weeping cried, 'That is the gentle one who opened my eyes'; a second answered, 'He raised my brother from the dead'; a third struck in, 'I was possessed of evil spirits, and He cast them out'. 'Who can this be by my side?' the poor thief cried in his own heart. He did not know that all he heard that day was spoken in his hearing because God in that way was bringing the things of Christ, by which he was to be saved, near to his soul.

From the Sufferer Himself, whose approach brought out those words, no word fell. He continued silent. Worn, weary, as a sheep before her shearers, as a lamb brought to the slaughter, He was dumb, opening not His mouth. But by and by the murmured words on the sidepaths changed into bursts of sorrow. As the great Sufferer passed, grateful women in the crowd, and mothers and sisters whom He had blessed, burst into sobs and wailing. And then the silence of the Lamb of God was broken. But it was broken only to turn the sorrow of the sorrowing women to themselves. 'Daughters of Jerusalem,' He cried, 'weep not for Me. Weep for yourselves and for your children, and for the days of evil which are about to be.'

The poor thief was more and more filled with amazement; and more than ever the question kept rising in his soul: 'Who can this Sufferer and the Speaker of such words be?' Then he noticed that the Lord grew faint and sank under the burden of the cross. Then he saw the beam laid on Simon the Cyrenian, who was standing by. At length the procession arrived at Calvary. And once more he was struck by the silence of Jesus. He could see that loving friends were present and in tears. His mother was there, and friends of hers, and some of His disciples. And perhaps he heard some of their sorrowful words of grief, and what they said about the innocence and goodness of the Beloved One who was about to be put to death. He saw the title

nailed on the cross of Jesus: 'This is the King of the Jews'. And then the terrible nails were driven in, through feet and hands, and the Innocent One and the two thieves were hung up on the crosses and left to die.

To die in that way, on a cross, with nails driven through the tender flesh of hands and feet, is one of the most horrible deaths. The sufferings are terrible. And it is no wonder if the sufferers are made mad by what they suffer, and in their madness break out into curses and reproaches and evil words.

But the wonderful thing which the poor thief I am telling you about noticed in Jesus was that He began to pray. Not only so. It was a prayer for the very people who were putting Him to death that he heard: 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do'. Although he would be suffering the same terrible pains as the others, he was arrested by this prayer. It was prayer to a Father; it was prayer for enemies. More than ever rose in his soul the question: 'Who can this be who on the very cross prays for the men who put Him there?'

Perhaps it was the madness caused by the pain he suffered which made the other thief break out into reproaches against the Lord. But it was wicked, inhuman cruelty which led the priests and scribes standing by to take up the reproaches and cry in mockery: 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend from the cross, that we may see and believe.'

The evil men who uttered those words did not know that their words were to bring light and salvation to one of the sufferers there that day. But it was so. They were—without intending it—lifting up the glad tidings concerning Christ to the thirsting heart of the listening thief. Everything he saw and heard that day went to his heart and became a preacher of Christ to him. Christ's own conduct, the title on the cross, the prayer to His Father, the prayer for His enemies, and now the words 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save,' and the other words 'Christ, the King of Israel,' went to his heart.

Racked by pain though he was, his spirit was stirred by what he heard. Ideas that had lain slumbering in him from his childhood rose to the surface of his soul. His whole being was moved. Through the prayer of Christ there came to him the vision once known, long lost, of a Father—a Father, a Hearer of prayer, a Father who had forgiveness even for enemies. And in Christ he was near to One different from everybody he had known, One who could pray for His enemies. It was a revelation of things that had been hidden by his sins from his eyes. And higher than ever rose the question: 'Who can this be by whose side I am here to die?'

Two things were made by the Spirit of God to bring light to him. First of all the inscription on

the cross of Jesus: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews'; and next the words of the cruel taunt: 'If Thou be the Son of God, the Messiah, come down from the cross'.

Little by little, over the waves of pain he was suffering, dawned the grand truth which was to save his soul. It was borne in upon him that this Sufferer so near, so silent, so blameless, was really the Son of God, and the promised Messiah and King of Israel. His eyes were opened. He saw God in the suffering Lamb of God. The things that were that morning unseen to him opened their gates and drew him gently within their light. And in that light he found God.

Be sure this was not the first time God had tried to bring him to Himself. More likely it was the last stage in a long journey by which God was leading him to the Saviour. I always think, when I read the prayer he addressed to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,' that behind its words shines, although dimly, the fact that he was a poor Israelite, not a heathen; that he knew the Israelites' hope of a Messiah; that perhaps he had been taught it when he was a child, by his mother; or by his father when he was still an innocent boy. And there it lay, from his early years until now, in his heart, a light shining in a dark place, a light that only God could have kindled and kept burning. And it is this very light that came out in the prayer: 'Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom'.

There is just one thing more in the story. Could the holy Jesus listen to such a man? Was there any hope that a man so lost, so stained with crime, could have favourable answer to such a prayer? It was great faith that spoke in him; his faith made him very bold; but could there be any answer to his faith?

The answer was the granting of his prayer. The Saviour did not repel him, did not put his prayer away. He pitied him. He accepted him. He assured him that on that very day he should be with Himself in Paradise. 'This day, O stained life, O broken heart, thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.'

That is the wonderful story. In the shadow of death, amid the pains of the cross, this poor lost one found God. He found God, and his soul was saved. His life was lost. There never could come a time when he would not regret that his life had not been lived to God. But he himself was saved. He found God, and finding God, found heaven. That very day he was admitted into the joy and fellowship of the eternal world. And he found God—to God be given the glory!—because God in His great mercy had watched over him, perhaps through long years had sought after him, and amid the very shadows of death found him.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 329.



# ST. MARK

## OUR EXAMPLE IN TEMPTATION

'And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.'—MARK I, 12, 13.

WE will think about **Our Saviour's Temptation**, for He is our example.

Suppose you hear that some one has enlisted, what does that mean? He has become a soldier.

Yes, and whose army have we enlisted in? Jesus Christ's army.

Yes, and we have a battle to fight 'under Christ's banner, against sin, the world, and the devil'.

Jesus is the leader of that army, and the clergy are officers who give His messages and commands to the soldiers. The stole is the officer's uniform. It shows that he is sent by Jesus to give His message to the soldiers. When I preach to you I don't come in my own name but in His, and the message He has sent me to give you is to tell you to pray to Him to help you to follow His example in your temptations, and then you will be victorious.

Would you think much of a soldier who ran away from battle, because he was afraid of getting wounded? No.

No, we should think him a coward. A soldier must be ready to bear suffering. There was once a great soldier called Sir Henry Havelock who served in the Indian Mutiny and other battles, and he became a General; and on his memorial tablet, in the chapel of his old school in London, are these words, 'Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a Good Soldier of Jesus Christ'. You see, a soldier in Jesus Christ's army has to be brave and to endure hardness as much as a soldier in the King's army; and we will think of the example Our Leader sets us in this matter.

I. Let us think of the *enemy* Jesus is leading His army against. When an army is going to battle a strict look-out is kept all round to watch the movements of the enemy, so that he may not attack them when they are off their guard. In the same way Jesus Christ's soldiers must be on their guard against that enemy who is always ready to attack them. Who is that enemy? Satan.

Yes; and directly we begin to think we have overcome him, and get off our guard, he will attack us and get the best of us when we are least expecting him; so we must pray that we may never be off our guard. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'

Can you tell me the name of one of the Apostles who fell through thinking he stood, and getting off his guard? St. Peter.

Yes; although St. Peter had protested that he

would never deny Jesus, even if he had to die with Him, he denied three times ever knowing anything about Him.

This is just what happens to us. We get off our guard, and Christ's soldiers are conquered by their enemy.

If St. Peter had been more on his guard, I am sure he would never have denied Jesus, for he loved Him so much; and I am afraid we often have all St. Peter's weakness without the deep love he had for his Master. You must never give way to despair when you have yielded to temptation, but you must try, in Jesus' strength, to do better in the future; St. Peter did not give way to despair, but he learnt not to trust in his own strength; and he warns us, 'Be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour'. Lent is the *special* time for us to be vigilant, and to be finding out what our temptations are, and to be making resolutions about them.

A man in great danger made a vow that he would sacrifice a thousand bulls to Jupiter if he would rescue him from his danger. Jupiter did rescue him, but when the danger was over the man thought a thousand bulls were too many, and he said he would sacrifice five hundred bulls, and then he came down to one hundred, and then he made up his mind he would only give Jupiter one bull. But it was a very hot day and he altered his mind again, and said he was sure Jupiter would like a bunch of grapes better than a bull, so he bought a bunch of grapes to offer to Jupiter, but ended by eating them himself. So you see although he began by determining to offer a thousand bulls to Jupiter, he ended by giving him nothing at all. This shows how our Lent resolutions will end, unless we constantly pray about them.

II. How long has Satan been our enemy? From the beginning.

Yes, from the very first; ever since he tempted Eve to disobey God in the Garden of Eden. St. John speaks of him as 'a murderer from the beginning'. He murders our souls. He is fighting always against God.

Does it make Satan angry to see Christ's soldiers do wrong? No.

No, it pleases him, because he knows they are getting more into his power, and becoming more like himself. Satan hates everything good, and so he is always tempting us to do wrong.

Does God ever tempt us to do wrong? No.

No; but he allows Satan to tempt us, so that He may see whether we will give way to Satan, or re-

member our promise 'to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end'.

It is very hard to stand against some of Satan's temptations, but we *could* stand against them if only we trusted more in God, for the Bible tells you that 'God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,' but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape.

Jesus is the example for us to follow in resisting temptation. Satan tempted Him just after He had been baptised, and when we have been baptised, and have promised 'to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants,' Satan tempts us to give up our Master's service.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 201.

### JESUS AND ANIMALS

'And He was there in the wilderness forty days . . . with the wild beasts.'—MARK I. 13.

THE most regal thing God has given us in all the many, many glorious gifts of His goodness is a heart—a heart to love with. Living, as we do, in a world where so much is thought of swords and guns, and metal crowns, and the kingdoms which such things win and rule, we almost naturally think little or nothing of the conquest of the heart and of the kingdom of love. Of course we have a heart; everybody has a heart, and of course we must love with it; but that it can do what guns and swords and thrones do, win a kingdom and rule it—that we do not so clearly see. Yet love is the crown of God; He wears no other. Love is the throne of God; amongst His creatures, with hearts at least, He sits on no other. And His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom only because all its subjects are subjects of love.

We read in history of the young child of a king who, while his father was sleeping, lifted his father's crown to his own brow, and said, as he felt its rim pressing on his head, 'Now I'm a king'. Be this as it may, whenever you make any creature of God see your love, when you lift your heart to your brow, you are putting your Father's crown upon your head—the crown of God.

Now, let us see Jesus wearing His Father's crown and sitting in a kingdom of love. 'And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness, and He was there in the wilderness forty days, and was with the wild beasts'—bears, hyenas, wolves, and lions; for such were the wild beasts of that desert in His day. He was there five weeks, rather more, alone, without gun, or sling, or bow, or staff, and He spent all this time without one fear, and left at length alive and without one wound, without even one single scratch. How was this? I think I know. To wild beasts God has given hearts; He has made even them to know love. The she-wolf loves her whelps, and the lioness wails for the hunger of her cubs, and the bear turns a hero when defending his wife and home; they have all hearts and are all capable of love, and Jesus, too, had a heart, and such a transcendent heart that the wild beasts could feel its spell. It gave them a new experience; it cast out fear of man.

They gladly yielded themselves to its charm, and bestowed in return their rude confidence and affection. They felt He wore the golden crown of love upon His brow, the crown of God, and they felt trust, reverence, and worship. And that is how it was that Jesus was with them unharmed. 'Perfect love casteth out fear.'

A few years ago there was a man who astonished the world with his marvellous power over horses. The very wildest of them, those that were mere savage beasts, became as enthusiastic to him as loyal people are to a king. Some of these had thrown their riders, trampled on them, torn them with their teeth, and were given up as utterly hopeless, and were allowed to live only for the sake of their splendid form and looks; yet even these just yielded themselves to him like a playful kitten to a little child. There was one magnificent animal, a soldier's horse, which stood chief amongst these terrible brutes. It was like the man living among the tombs we read of in the Gospels. No man could tame it, nor could it be bound. Its name was 'Cruiser,' but it was also called 'Savage'. Yet Mr. Rarey undertook to subdue it, and in spite of all warnings as to the risks he ran, had it turned loose in its stall, then without one fear and with the calmness and dignity which is given by greatness of heart, he began his taming work. The extraordinary sight of his perfect love raised in the mind of the horse an altogether new emotion. What had it to fear in *him*? Tamer and horse looked at each other, and their eyes met and told tales; the man's of deep pity and love, the horse's of losing fear, till the horse got fully to believe in the man; the arms of their hearts met and clasped. At length the brute gently lay down at Mr. Rarey's bidding, and Mr. Rarey lay down on it like a fond child leaning on his brave big dog. No language can convey the intensity and entireness with which these two trusted one another. And the amazed soldiers gave the creature a new name, a redeemed name, they called it 'Darling'. The word was wrung from them as, through tears of pure manly joy, they saw the very same kind of power binding those two which bound themselves to their baby child, and their baby child to them. And this name for the horse came unconsciously, just as when looking into the charmed and captivated baby's face, the delighted exclamation, 'Darling!' sprang to their lips; and some of them were heard to say, with more feeling than they cared to show, and for want of something better, 'God bless the brute!'

And what was it that was this tamer's marvellous strength? It was his heart. He had lifted the Great Father's crown to his brow. The brute saw it, felt its charm, fell down before it and worshipped. The kingship of love was within it, its King had come, and it was mere pleasure to obey.

God has put the animal world 'under us' by giving us larger hearts than theirs. But we may rule in the kingdom of the lash, instead of in the kingdom of the heart, with a black crown of terror,

not a bright crown of love. With the lash and terror, we are usurpers and tyrants; with heart and love we are the rightful sons and daughters of the Most High. The divinest thing the world has yet seen, or will ever see, is the influence of one living heart upon another.—BENJAMIN WAUGH, *Sunday Evenings with my Children*, p. 73.

## SEEDS

'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.'—MARK IV. 26, 27.

CHRIST in boat—bright spring day—fields by lake's side—picture out. Took His text from plants, sowers, etc. *Our* text part of *His* sermon.

1. His Text—Seeds.—Walk through garden early in year—everything coming up—'Spring' (springing time). Why?

1. There was seed sown.

2. There has been moisture to water the seed—rain, dew, etc.

3. The sun's warmth. If in hot-house, still warmth came from the sun first—coal heats fire, and coal is preserved sunshine.

II. Seed Sown in us.—Each of us is a garden—seed sown—teaching—Bible—sermons. I am sowing now, or trying to sow. Plenty been sown in time past. *Is it coming up?* Has it made us do anything?—more obedient?—helpful?

What makes it come up?

1. Holy Spirit—moisture to plant (John vii. 38, 39; Hos. xiv. 5).

2. Love of our Lord Jesus; like sun's warmth. See what St. Paul says (2 Cor. v. 14), 'constraineth us'.

III. Ourselves as Seeds.—Walk in another garden, just by church—ever seen them sowing seeds there? Yes, seeds our bodies (1 Cor. xv. 42). They too *must* all come up. How? As *weeds* or *plants*? For God's beautiful garden, or to be cast out?

If want to be among the good *plants*, then must take care now that we are good *gardens*. The way we treat the seed sown in us, makes us as seeds, good or bad.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 62.

## THE GROWING SEED

'And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.'—MARK IV. 26-29.

The man in this parable casts the seed into the ground, and then sleeps by night, and during the day attends to other matters. He leaves the seed alone, for he can do no more for it. He is not blamed for sleeping, as his sleepless anxiety could do no good. The earth does the rest, for the seed grows up without his help, and in a way he does not understand.

The seed is the word, and the sower here is man. It cannot be Christ, for He knows how the seed grows. The lesson is that Christ's kingdom is a growing kingdom, that it grows like grain, and that man's part after all is small.

I. The Seed.—The Word of God is likened not to grass that grows of itself, but to grain that would die if not sown every year. As the seed suits the soil, so the word suits the heart. 'God does not make half hinges.' He makes whole hinges, of which the parts exactly fit into one another. The seed and the soul have the same Maker, and were made for each other.

II. The Sowing.—Without sowing there is no harvest, and yet the sowing is a very simple thing. It is not like the planting of a tree which needs much skill, but it is 'as if a man should cast seed into the ground,' as a sower of corn simply throws the seed from his hand. Chance-sown seeds scattered by the wind often grow well. I have seen seeds sown in a little child's garden by a child's unskilled hand, and they grew beautifully. And often the seed dropped into a heart by a child's hand has ripened into a rich harvest. You too can be a true sower, for you have not to create but only to scatter the seed. A tiny hand can do that, and the earth will bring forth fruit of itself. A grand harvest may spring from a servant's or a child's poor sowing.

III. The Growing.—The growth of seed is among the greatest wonders in the world; it is an everyday miracle. It goes on during the silent hours of night, and lies quite beyond the ken and power of man. The power of growth in the tiniest plants is beyond belief. Christ sets it forth by a double phrase, 'should spring and grow up' (ver. 27). A seedling will burst the solid rock. Some seeds hollow out marble in their hunger for food and growth; and in a new book called  *Rays from the Realms of Nature*  (p. 43), I read that a single growing mushroom can raise a flagstone. God's Word is a seed of a growing and thriving kind which triumphs over all hindering things. God has given it a life and power of its own, and without the sower's aid it grows of itself from within. The two chief lessons of this parable are, that the seed grows slowly and gently, and that its growth, in its beginning, middle, and end, is always without man's help and beyond his knowledge.

Christ bids the sower *be thankful*, for he is a worker with God, who needs and honours Him. The harvest comes not without His aid.

*Be humble*.—How little man knows about the growth of the seed in the dark earth, and how little he can do for it!

*Be patient*—not like the child who pulls up the flower to see how the roots are growing. Don't expect the growth of grace in your own heart to be over in a day. The law of harvest is 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear'. You must begin with the A B C of grace, and go on step by step. And in Christ's work among others, be not over-busy, or fussy. Do not give out that



you know all about it, that you have secrets which other people have not, and that you know how to make the sown seed grow. Do not vex yourself in vain by taking the whole burden upon yourself, and forgetting God's part in it. Pray that you may have great reverence.

**IV. The Grain.**—We catch a tone of joyous wonder in the words, 'After that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, . . . because the harvest is come' (v. 27, 28). This abundance and perfection of harvest teach that every Christian should ripen into strength and beauty. God's seed has a self-improving power, by which it grows towards its best state. It is not enough that the seed sown live and grow: it should reach the full corn in the ear, the round healthy fruit. Sowing is not all, conversion is not all, a little growth is not enough. I have been reading with great pleasure the life of a good man. When I had done I said to myself, Why has this life so delighted and satisfied me? The reason was that the history of that man was just the history of the seed-corn in this parable. Year by year he was growing stronger, and wiser, and more beautiful. His failings passed away one by one. He gradually got the better of his gloominess and his bad temper. He threw himself with more joy and heart into all his duties; and he came to his grave in a good old age as a shock of corn fully ripe. Be this the story of your life, 'First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear'.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 75.

### LITTLE SHIPS

'And there were also with Him other little ships.'—MARK  
IV. 36.

WE are not told that these little ships crossed the sea to the other side. If they did, they would have to face the storm which came suddenly upon the sea that night, but they would also share in the calm and peace that the Saviour spoke. It does say, 'There were also *with Him* other little ships'. Linked with Him, and all is well.

The larger ship, in which the Saviour and His disciples were, supplies us with a very striking illustration of the Church preserved and guided by Jesus, and 'the other little ships' may be taken as a picture of the children under the love and protection of Christ.

These 'little ships' suggest a few solemn thoughts about individual responsibility. We need to be watchful, careful, and prayerful, or the storms of life will overcome us.

**I. Little Ships Carry Precious Cargo.**—Little ships carry both treasure and life: so do little folks. The soul with all its precious powers. The mind to know the Lord. The conscience to feel the Lord. The heart to love the Lord, and the memory to remember Him. This treasure is of more value than the whole world (Mark vii. 36, 37).

**II. Little Ships Need Guiding.**—These little ships would require a great deal of managing on the sea that

night, for a great storm broke upon them, and if not guided well they would have gone to pieces. And on the sea of life there are storms, rocks, and quicksands, and dangers of every description. There is sin, selfishness, forgetfulness of God, and fatal indifference, all of which will sink the soul if they are not overcome, and only Jesus can save us from our sins (Acts iv. 12; Matt. 1. 21).

Every ship, small or great, requires a captain, chart, cable, and compass, if it is to cross in safety over the wide ocean. 'So every person, young or old, needs a sure Guide to steer him to the harbour of eternal rest, and all is provided for by Divine grace (Psalm cvii. 7).

The pilot guides the vessel out of the harbour, and past all the dangerous rocks and shoals, and only when she is safe in the deep ocean does he leave her in charge of the captain, who is well acquainted with the ocean, and is capable of taking her safely to the other side. So it is the duty of parents, teachers, and preachers to steer the children safely past all the dangers of youth to the great Captain of our Salvation.

**III. Little Ships can be Useful.**—They often do more business, in proportion, than larger ones, because more easily managed. And how very useful little people can be, if they have the right spirit.

Think of little Samuel lighting the lamps, and opening the doors in the Temple, how useful to Eli the Priest.

Think of the little maid who told Naaman of the prophet Elisha in Israel, how useful she was to Naaman.

A little boy once said to his mother, 'I should like to have lived in the time of our Saviour, that I might have done something for Him'. His mother replied, smiling, 'Why, what could a child of your age have done to prove your love to Him?' 'I would have run errands for Him,' answered the boy. Children can do that for Jesus now.

**IV. Little Ships must be Careful.**—All who manage ships have to be careful, because there are so many dangers, and certain rules and regulations must be observed or disaster will overtake them; therefore, all who are responsible must be acquainted with the rules for sailing, the lights of warning, and the flags of communication. So in the great voyage of life there are rules to observe, warnings to note, and lights to follow, or we shall go wrong.

A country lad, who was leaving his Sunday school and home to go up to London to take a situation there, was accompanied to his starting-place by a Christian friend, who kindly said to him, 'Now, my boy, recollect you are going to launch your craft on a dangerous ocean'. 'Yes, I know it,' said the boy; and taking a Bible out of his pocket and holding it up, he added, 'But you see I have got a safe chart to steer by.'

**V. Little Ships may be Lost.**—Ships of all kinds may be lost through leakage, fire or collision, rocks or storms, and sink with all hands on board; and

oh, how sad the loss. The vessel, the treasure, the lives all gone, to be recovered no more in this world; and if the owners are not insured it means bankruptcy and ruin. And how true this is with regard to our lives, both old and young. Sin may overcome us; Satan may overturn us; the world may overwhelm us, and our own evil hearts deceive us, and we may be lost. As with the ship, so with ourselves. Ignorance, carelessness, or neglect may lose us everything, and what a loss! The soul lost; life lost; salvation lost, and heaven lost. Oh, how sad the thought of being lost!

One dark wild night in the month of October, 1863, two men and a boy were clinging to the rigging of a stranded vessel off the city of Toronto. They had lashed themselves to the vessel to keep from being washed overboard by the heavy swells that every moment broke entirely over them. Amid the darkness of the night and the fury of the tempest *Death* came riding on the billows and took the spirit of one from its tenement of clay. He was the captain's son, a boy of fourteen years. Just before he died he said to his father, 'Father, are you afraid to die? I am not, and oh, I know I shall die, I am so cold.' Then his spirit passed away to be with Christ.

Are you ready if death should come to you? If not, let the Captain, the Lord Jesus, come on board your soul, and then He shall save and guide you.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 60.

### FEARFULNESS

'Why are ye so fearful?'—MARK IV. 40.

I. SINFUL fear is always unreasonable. It does not know what it is afraid of. Is there a storm? It fears the storm. Do the waves fall? It fears the power that stilled them. Is to-day provided for? It fears for to-morrow. Is to-morrow secure? It fears for next year. And is next year assured? It fears for old age. And this is fearfulness. When we become so full of fear that there is room in us for nothing else. No room for love! No room for hope! No room for kindness and doing good! Only room for the blind selfish spirit of fret and fear. Godly fear humbles. Sinful fear benumbs. Godly fear thinks of another. Sinful fear only of itself. Godly fear leads to goodly living. Sinful fear to trickery, meanness, and deceit. Which fear is yours to-day? Is it the latter? Master, awake! carest Thou not that we perish? Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?

I take it that this sinful fear is far commoner than we commonly imagine. Unless it were very common, 'twould be hard to see why we should admire courage so heartily. Let but a lad show a brave heart, and we are all drawn to him. Let but a man cross Africa, or make for the North Pole, or fight the flames, or do gallant things in the battle, and we shall forgive him almost anything. So hearty is our admiration for courage. Now if you have lived with open eyes you must have noticed by this

time that it is not the way of human nature to admire what is common. We set a low price on what we all possess. We value the diamond which is rare, and not the dewdrop which is everywhere. We prize the lily which is scarce, not the abundant daisy. What is rare we value, and what is common we despise. So by the value set on courage, learn its rarity. The very applause we give it shows that it is uncommon. If every one had it no one would think twice of it. So take this comfort. Don't think yourself a timid lad in a great world of heroes. That will discourage and dispirit you. And the facts are not so. In every heart there is some strain of fear. And these alone become truly brave and truly moral men, who, knowing that, set out on life determined to master it, and to be strong in spite of it. And that is always possible when we set out in life with Jesus. For in His fulness of grace (and grace is always brave) there is enough for you and me.

II. Now whence does this fearfulness spring? What is its origin? To learn that, as to learn all like things, I turn to the Bible. Can we catch fear as it comes skulking on the stage of human life? Let us go to the first chapter of the first book and see. In the beginning was a great deep, and on the face of the deep, darkness. Darkness, deeps, chaos, and yet in angel or in seraphim we do not read of any fear. The earth is formed, the waters gather in their beds, the sun looks forth to gild them. The moving creatures come. The air is startled by the sound of wings. The cattle browse over the unfenced meadows. And yet there is no fear. And then comes man, fearless in presence of sun and moon and cloud, of precipice and mountain, of behemoth and great leviathan, until—until he ate the fruit, and sinned, and fell, and hid himself. And then God called unto him, and said, Adam, where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid. So fear comes sneaking on to the stage of life, not with the sun and moon, and with the mighty beasts, but with *sin*. I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.

III. Well now, what of the conquest of this fearfulness? How are we to get rid of this that galls us so? I take some facts from the outward world, and put it to you in these ways.

Fear is conquered by *companionship*. That which we fear when alone, we laugh at when in company. To have the conquest of our fears we want a comrade in the house, a comrade in the way, a comrade in the battle. Keep that in mind, and take this text.

Fear is conquered by *knowledge*. As our experience grows, our fears grow less. When we know all, fearfulness will be gone. A little child begins by fearing almost everything, just because it begins by knowing almost nothing. Every worm may be a snake; every dog may be a wolf; every man may be a robber; in every dark corner may be a ghost. And so worm, dog, man, corner—all are fearful. But as

life lengthens, it learns better. It enters so many dark corners and finds no ghosts there that it loses faith in them. The more it learns the less it fears. Until when it has learned about as much as any of us learn, it fears about as much as any of us fear. So knowledge conquers fear.

Fear is conquered by *health*. The sick man's mind is full of fears. Shadows begin to dance before the eyes in sickness. Let but a man be strong and healthy, and he can face wellnigh anything. It is in hours of weakness or prostration that the fears creep out. And there is no conquest for these fears but just to get the health again. Now holiness is just spiritual healthiness. Until the life be holy it is sick. And till the life be holy 'twill always be surrounded by these fears of ill-health. To be free from fears then, there must be spiritual health. And as the life grows holier, so will the fears grow less. And yet again.

Fear is conquered by *faith*. Faith is the great enemy of fear. Much fear and little faith; much faith and little fear. Faithless and fearful—these twain go together. As faith brightens, fear sets. As fear rises, faith sinks. 'Tis thus in all our life. You go to bed in faith that the sun will rise. No man can give you any assurance of to-morrow's sunrise.

Comradeship, knowledge, health, faith, these things you need for a brave and noble life. And all these things we offer you in Jesus Christ the Saviour. You need faith? That is the Master's gift. You need spiritual health? Christ is made unto us sanctification. You need knowledge? He is the Teacher. And you need comradeship? He is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and He has said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 88.

#### ANSWERS TO PRAYERS

'And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. He . . . prayed Him that he might be with Him.'—MARK v. 12, 17, 18.

HERE are three prayers, one of them good and two of them bad. Maybe they will teach us something. The disciples were good men who wished to be better, so they came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. They had to learn how to pray aright, and had to learn from the best of all teachers—from Jesus Himself. So should we: there are things we need to be wise about if we would pray properly, and these three prayers may help us to this.

Here is what brought the three prayers together. Jesus had just crossed the stormy lake to save one soul. Yes, He went all that way, and took all that trouble to save just *one*. How precious every soul must be to Him when He counts nothing a labour if it can only be saved! This was a poor man who was like a madman, he was so wild and wicked; all manner of evil spirits had taken possession of his heart. Ah! there are people still who have unclean, very unclean spirits dwelling in them; all their thoughts

are filthy, and all their doings are vile. Everybody turned away in fear from this man, but it was just because he was so bad that Jesus sought for him now. It is always His way; as doctors go where the sick are to make them better, Jesus goes where the sinful are to save them if they will let Him.

The devils that were in this poor man trembled when they saw Jesus. They knew Him; they had seen Him in heaven before He came to earth, and now they were afraid of Him—afraid that He would cast them out from their dwelling in this man's heart, and would leave them homeless to shudder and drift in the winds. So they prayed; yes, the devils *prayed!*—but what a prayer! It was that they might be allowed to go into some swine that were near, and wallow with them. *Their prayer was granted!*—and they and the swine both soon came to a bad end. It was a prayer they should never have made.

The people who owned the swine were greatly troubled at their loss. But they were in an awkward fix; if they summoned Jesus before the magistrate to make Him pay for the loss of the swine, they would be punished themselves, for they were Jews, and it was against the law for them to keep swine. They had been breaking the law all along, so they could not now ask the help of the law. But they were determined to stick to their sin and their swine, so—what do you think?—they also *prayed!* Yes, but what a prayer!—it was to ask Jesus to go away from them and never come back! They would rather have their sin than their Saviour! And their prayer also was answered; Jesus went away and never returned. Could you bear that thought?—that Jesus had gone away from you, and taken His Holy Spirit with Him, and had abandoned you to your sins? Then take care how you want Him to keep out of the way that you may get doing the thing that is wrong. The worst thing we can do is to pray Jesus to leave us, because we prefer our sins, and the worst thing that can happen to us is to have that prayer answered.

But the third prayer is perhaps the strangest of all. It was the prayer of the man from whom the evil spirits had been cast out; he was now healed and in his right mind, and his heart was full of gratitude and love to Jesus. His prayer was a very beautiful and loving one: it was that he might go with Jesus and be with Him wherever He went. *But that prayer was refused!* He was told to stay where he was; he would do most good there, by telling others what Jesus had done for him. Two bad prayers were answered, while a good one was denied.

When we are bent on a thing and are determined to have it or to do it, it is not true prayer we are saying then, whatever words we may use, for true prayer always says to Jesus, 'Grant this, please, if it is good for me, and good for others, and if it is what will please Thee; if not, then please do not answer it: Thou knowest best'. This is true prayer, and the



kindest, most merciful thing Jesus can sometimes do is *not* to let us have what we want.

It was for judgment He answered the two bad prayers, but it was in love He denied the prayer that was good. This man was saved, and if he remained where he was, and did what Jesus told him, you may be very sure it was that somebody else would be saved by him. Jesus needed him to be a missionary at home instead of abroad, and so did not answer his prayer to go with Him, but left him where he was—and left him in love. By and by they would meet again in the glory, and there, maybe, there would also be those who were saved by this man.

Learn the lesson, then; don't be disappointed when your prayers are not answered as you would wish. Just think—it is the best prayer that is sometimes denied, and denied in tenderest love; and they are the worst prayers that are sometimes answered, but are answered in judgment and anger. Then leave it all with Jesus; tell Him what you would like to be or to do, but leave it with Him to decide what shall be best.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 123.

#### NIHIL TETIGIT QUOD NON ORNAVIT

'He hath done all things well.'—MARK VII. 37.

A FEW yards back from the ceaseless traffic of the London Strand, in the quiet precincts of the Temple Church, there lies buried the body of Oliver Goldsmith. His monument is in Westminster Abbey. And on his monument are these words, bad Latin but goodly praise, 'Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit'. They mean, 'He touched nothing which he did not adorn'.

I wish these words to be our motto to-night. I wish to carry you back eighteen hundred years to the man Jesus. I want to bring you out of your homes and out of your town into the roads and villages of Galilee. I would have you mingle with the throngs of folk just at the time when there was moving among them that wonderful personality, Jesus of Nazareth.

And I desire to do this in order that we may understand a little better than we usually do, how everything that Jesus touched was by that touch adorned. All of us influence what we touch. As the light radiates from the sun, so influence for good or ill ceaselessly streams from you and me. Most of us think far too much of our abilities. Few of us think half enough of our influence. Few men are half so clever as they fancy. Most men are far more influential than they deem. And to-night I wish to speak for a little about the influence of Jesus of Nazareth.

When you and I begin to open our eyes upon this world, three mysteries arrest us. The first is *language*, the garment of our thought. The second is *nature*, the garment of our God. The third is *character*. These three mysterious agencies and ends impress us, and are in turn by us impressed. These three were touched by Jesus. I wish to show how, touching, He adorned them.

**I. Language.**—You can tell a lad by his language

just as you can tell him by his friends. I never found a prurient mouth joined with a pure heart. I never heard of a foul tongue keeping company with a fine soul. There is no chemical test for an acid so sure as the tongue-test for the acids of the heart. If thou wouldst play the hypocrite, do it in silence. Thy speech betrayeth thee. The dullest ear detects the ring of it far sooner than thou thinkest.

Now there is no better sign of lad or girl or man, than just the power to take our homely words, and fill them with new and nobler meaning. I suppose every family circle has its own idioms and tricks of speech. That is all natural and harmless. But there are homes where every second word has got some mean or foolish or corrupted association. That is not wise nor right. It is debasing a sacred thing, and some day the habit will recoil upon the speaker. But to respect, exalt, ennoble homely words, that is good work for a man, and good work for a language too.

Be jealous of your words. Put noble meanings into them. Let love, and life, and work, and play, and home, and school be royal words for you. To deal with common speech like that is to follow in the steps of Jesus.

**II.** Now let me turn to *Nature*. The world of mountains and of hills, of rivers and of plains, of trees and flowers, lay around Jesus as it lies round you and me to-day. Our Lord touched that too, and in touching He adorned it.

There was the *water*, for example. Nothing so common as water in all nature. And in some little measure we have learned to use it. We make it work our wheels. We turn it into steam and make it carry us. And so with the thought and labour of nineteen hundred years we have uplifted it a little. We have impressed it into the ministries of man. But Jesus—He was ahead of us all nineteen hundred years ago. He found it at the marriage-feast, and when He left it, it was wine. And He found wine on His last supper-table, and when He touched that it was stamped for ever as the sign and seal of His own blood. Water to wine, wine to blood, see how He lifts upward what He touches. Such common things are glorified when brought within the sweep of Jesus.

But still more wonderful is Jesus' treatment of the *mustard-seed*. It is the smallest of the seeds, and you could put, I fancy, ten thousand of them on an inch. Tell me, what do *you* see there? A speck, a grain, one of a thousand particles, that is all. Apply your strongest glass to it. And now you see its linings and its fissures. Now take your eye away, and let Christ put His eye there. What seest *Thou*, O Jesus? I see the kingdom of God in it, blind child! For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed. Yes! burst thine integuments, thou little seed, and grow till thou art big as the whole world! For Peter is off to Babylon, and Paul to Rome, and Augustine to England, and Livingstone to Africa, and nations are overthrown, and

Christ is conquering! And it is all in the mustard-seed. Always in the mustard-seed. Only it needed the eye of Jesus to see it there. Were ever flowers and seeds so glorified before or after? Was ever nature so wonderfully interpreted as that? Did you ever hear of one who pressed the common things into such royal service, or set such a crown on them as that?

III. Lastly, let us think of the influence of Jesus upon **Character**.—We judge a soil by its crops. We judge a tree by its effects. We judge a force, a person, a gospel by its fruits. How did the touch of Jesus affect the men and women whom He met?

I take two instances, a man and a woman. Across the Lake of Galilee there is a hill-side, and cut in the limestone rock of the hill-side there are tombs. And in the tombs, dwelling and howling, a man possessed by devils. He is the terror of the neighbourhood. The fishermen at their nets shudder as his cries come sounding over the water. The mother in the village draws her little one closer to her breast at night, as the fierce blasphemies of the man come borne on the wind over the cottage-roofs. No man could bind him. He snapped the chains like flax. Every man shunned him. Till Jesus appears and faces him, and meets him. And the fishermen will wonder to-night why there is no howling and moaning across the water. The mother will sing to her little one, 'The wild man is asleep'. But he never was wider awake. He never was a man till now. Clothed, sane, worshipping—that was what meeting Jesus meant for him.

What splendid possibilities for character does the Gospel of such a Saviour give! There is hope for us all when we have to do with One who could find a sensible man in a demoniac, and see a worshipping woman in a harlot. Bad as we are, there are some chances for us when we have to deal with a Lord whose eye and whose power are like that. All philosophies are blind compared with the piercing glance of Jesus. And half His grief in heaven is just that He sees what you might grow to and might become if you would but trust Him fully. And that you have never done.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 149.

### HAVING SALT

'Have salt in yourselves.'—MARK IX. 50.

SALT comes from the ocean, the salt lakes, the subterranean brines, and from the rocks.

Salt is found in many parts of the earth. In our own country the most extensive deposits are to be found in the State of New York, in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Michigan, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, and Texas. Large quantities of salt are taken from the waters of Great Salt Lake in Utah, and from San Francisco Bay in California. Over 20,000,000 barrels of salt were produced last year, the value of which was over \$6,000,000.

In Europe the largest quantities of salt are found in the Cheshire district of England; at Stassfurt, Brunswick, and Hanover, all in Germany;

also at Wieliczka, Bochnia, and Hallstadt in Austria; Maramaros, Hungary; the Crimea and the Donetz Basin in Russia; and at Cardona, Spain. France and Italy produce great quantities of salt from the waters of the sea.

In a single year the entire output for the world is about 12,000,000 tons.

Among the Jews salt was the symbol of hospitality; as an antiseptic it was regarded as a symbol of durability, fidelity, and purity. This gave rise to the expression, 'covenant of salt,' and at the present time the eating of salt and bread together is regarded as a token of amity. The Persians use a term expressive of a traitor which literally means 'faithless to salt'. This idea of covenant-making with salt was, probably, the foundation for the use of salt in sacrifices, which ratified the mutual understandings between God and His people. It was, therefore, one of the articles bought and sold in the Temple. Even Greek and Roman peoples used salt in their religious ceremonies. In the days of Augustine, salt was used in the ceremony of baptism as a symbol of purity.

Our Lord used the symbolic meanings attached to salt to their fullest extent. His chief lesson was upon the value of influence, and He told His disciples that they were like the salt of the earth, the savour of which must be kept fresh, as their influence must be kept, in order to be of value. The Apostle Paul used salt as a figure of wisdom when he said to the Colossians, 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man'.

So by your influence, you may, like salt, preserve the world from evil, as Noah did in the times before the flood when the world was so bad, and later like Abraham, and still later like the prophets and the martyrs.

See what one little boy was able to do by shedding the influence of a bright and cheerful disposition. One morning, after a three days' rain, everybody in the house felt cross. The fire smoked, the breakfast-room was cheerless, and the baby was fretful. Presently Jack came in. He had with him the morning paper which he handed to his father with a cheerful 'Here's the paper, sir'. Then he went and kissed his mother, who was very tired from having been with the baby all through the night. Then he had a bright word for his sister, who smiled back at him, and when the cook came in with a frown on her face he said something to her that made her laugh. Then he poked up the fire, and after doing a number of little, bright things of that sort, he had us all smiling and joking each other, having forgotten all about the weather and the dark days of rain we had experienced, and in fact Jack had completely changed the atmosphere of things for the rest of the day. 'He is always so,' said his mother later, 'always just so sunny.'

Certainly it is a great distinction that Christ confers upon His disciples, by calling them the 'salt of

the earth'. We should be very proud of our influence for Him, and do all we can to extend it.—GEORGE V. REICHEL, *Bible Truth through Eye and Ear*, p. 363.

### BAPTISM

MARK X. 14.

TO-DAY I wish to say a word to you about yourselves.

It is a word which I have had on my heart for a long while to say.

Have you ever thought, when you have seen a baby baptised, that you too have been baptised?

And if you have thought of it, have you wished to know what your being baptised means for you?

1. It means that when your father and mother received you at your birth, they felt that you had been sent to them from God, and they promised you back to God: the baptising was the promise of your parents to God: We will bring up this child for Thee.

2. It means: baptised into the name of God, naming you unto God; you belong to God; you are children of God.

3. It means that the Church here received you into its membership.

You are members of the Christian Church; you are members very dear to God. He likes to see you here. He likes to hear your voice in the song of praise. He likes to feel your heart going out to Him in the prayers.

4. Your being baptised is a thing outside of you as yet. It does not save you. It is Christ Who saves you. But Christ says: You have My name: be My child; worship in spirit and in truth now. Think of it, and ask whether it means anything to you.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 5.

### THE SAVIOUR'S INVITATION TO LITTLE CHILDREN

'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'—MARK X. 14.

PARENTS, as a general thing, are devoted to their children.

The poet Lamartine, in alluding to his father and mother, says, 'I remember once to have seen the branch of a willow, which had been torn by the tempest's hands from the parent trunk, floating in the morning light upon the angry surges of the overflowing Saone. On it a female nightingale covered her nest, as it drifted down the foaming stream; and the male on the wing followed the wreck which was bearing away the object of his love.'

Beautiful illustration, indeed, of the tender affection of parents for their children. Much, however, as father and mother love their offspring, there is One whose feelings towards them are infinitely stronger and more enduring. I hardly need explain that I refer to our adorable Saviour.

Some of you must have seen the beautiful picture of Christ blessing little children. A crowd of people

had gathered about Him, listening with rapt attention to His gracious words. In the outer circle several mothers, with children in their arms, are trying to work their way through the throng that they may ask the Saviour to bless their little ones. Even His disciples imagine that He will not wish to be interrupted, and tell the women that they had better remain quietly where they are. Jesus sees it all, and is much displeased at this attempt to keep them back. He waved His hand to the crowd that they should open the way for the mothers to draw near, and said, in His gentlest accents, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me!'

One of the most pleasing characteristics of our Saviour's ministry was his genial, gracious manner towards little ones; and when we see them gathering about His knees we discover how strong must have been the power of sympathy which united them together.

The Lord Jesus is the same now that He was when He dwelt in Judæa so many ages ago. He is still saying, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me!'

The beautiful portion of the Gospel history connected with the text is read at the baptism of children; and when we hear it, the interest which He feels in them cannot be doubted.

'O mother,' said a little girl on returning from church, and running into her mother's sick-room, 'I have heard the child's Gospel to-day!' It was the very part which I am now preaching about.

Another, about seven years old, heard the same passage read when she was near death, and as her sister closed the book the little sick one said, 'How kind! I shall soon go to Jesus. He will take me up in His arms, and bless me, too!'

The sister tenderly kissed her, and asked, 'Do you love me, dearest?'

'Yes,' she answered, 'but, don't be angry, I love Jesus more!'

Why does the Saviour show such tender affection for children? I shall give you several reasons for it.

I. The Lord Jesus loves little children **Because They have a confiding Trust in God.**—It has been left for grown men and women to be guilty of unbelief.

A child was asked what faith was and promptly replied, 'It is doing God's will, and asking no questions'.

Could any definition have been better?

During a recent hard winter a poor widow, with several helpless children, was almost reduced to her last crust of bread, when one of her little boys, who saw her distress and anxiety, said to her, 'Please don't cry mother; I will write a letter to the Lord Jesus to help us'.

The woman was too much occupied with her troubles to notice his singular remark, and so taking her silence for approval of his purpose, he sat down and scrawled on a bit of paper, torn from an old



writing-book, these words: 'My dear Saviour: my poor mother and my little brothers and sisters have had no breakfast nor dinner to-day; please send us something to eat'. He then signed his name, with the street and number, and running to the post-office dropped the letter into the box. When the letters were assorted the clerk's attention was attracted by one directed in a child's hand, 'To the Lord Jesus Christ'. In his perplexity he showed it to the post-master, and he in turn handed it to a good Christian man who came into the office for his mail.

'I will take care of it!' said the gentleman. And so he did. He went directly to the place designated in the boy's note, and I need hardly tell you how much pleasure it gave him to help the poor family for the Saviour's sake.

II. Another reason why the Saviour is so much attached to children is **Because They have a Holy Fear of God.**—A wicked man, who was in the habit of going to a neighbour's field to steal corn, one day took his little son to help him carry the bag. Handing the bag to the child the father climbed up on the fence to take a good look about him, to see whether anyone was coming that way. Satisfied that all was safe he began to pluck the ears of corn and put them in the bag, which the boy held open for him. 'Father,' said the child looking up at the hardened man as he spoke, 'you forgot to look somewhere else.' The father was terrified, and asked, 'Which way, child?' 'You forgot to look up to the sky to see if God noticed you!' The reproof was too well deserved not to be received with patience, and father and son went home with an empty bag.

III. The Lord Jesus loves little children **Because They have no False Shame.**—Many grown people who are mindful of their prayers and other religious duties when they are by themselves, would hesitate a long while before they attended to these things if the eyes of their fellow-mortals should observe them.

Hundreds of passengers were preparing to retire to rest on board one of the fine steamers on the Hudson, but no looker-on would have suspected any of them with being religious so far as any outward recognition of God was concerned. In the midst of all this forgetfulness of Him there was one person on board who was not ashamed to acknowledge his dependence on his Heavenly Father's care. It was a little boy, who, all unconscious that he was doing any unusual thing, knelt down and prayed as he was accustomed to do at home.

IV. A fourth reason why the Saviour loves little children is **Because They have the Spirit of Humility.**

V. The Lord Jesus is also tenderly devoted to little children **Because They have the Spirit of Love.**—The punishment inflicted but a moment before for some childish offence is forgotten, and the arms of affection are ready to embrace the father or mother whose painful duty it has been to administer it. Indeed, it would often seem that love became stronger after each such reconciliation.

The love of children for their Father in heaven is a real thing. Is it any wonder, then, that He loves them so devotedly in return?

Children's prayers He deigns to hear;  
Children's songs delight His ear.

Human wisdom says to a child, 'Be a man!' Divine wisdom reverses the process, saying to the man who would secure God's favour, 'Be a child!'—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 190.

### THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

'And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.'—MARK XII. 28-30.

Ours is almost, if not quite, the only religion which teaches us to love God? The heathen do not love their gods. They are afraid of them; they are such horrid, ugly things; they are so fierce; they fear them.

It was thought that the Esquimaux had no word for 'love' in their language. At last they found one nearly two lines long. It makes two lines in a book—you could hardly say it. But ours is very short. If I were an Esquimaux, and I had to say 'love,' I should have to write a word of two lines, made up of all sorts of words. It is a great privilege that we can love God.

I have heard it said of a man, 'That man is a grave!' because something in him lay dead and buried. What do you think it was? Love. Love was dead and buried in him, so the man was a grave! 'Love' is our great law. We are attracted to God. Love is the law of attraction; the best law.

I. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' You won't love Him, you will never love the Lord, till you can call Him yours. 'Thy God.' 'My God.' 'He is my God.'

If a little girl likes her doll, she says, 'My doll.' If a boy likes his hoop, or bat, he says, 'My hoop; my bat.' We say, 'My father; my mother; my brother; my sister; my little wife; my husband.' 'My' is such a nice word. Till you can say 'thy' or 'my' you will not love God. But when you can say, 'My God!' then you will begin to love Him. 'The Lord thy God.'

When one of the Roman emperors—after a great triumph, a military victory—was coming back to Rome, he went up the Appian hill in great state, with his foes dragged at his chariot wheels. Many soldiers surrounded him, adding to his triumphant entry. On going up the hill a little child broke through the crowd. 'You must not go there,' said the soldiers, 'that is the emperor.' The little child replied, 'True, he is your emperor, but he is my father!' It was the emperor's own little boy. He said, 'He is your emperor, but he is my father.' I hope we shall be able to say that of God. He is

the God of everybody; but He is *my God* specially. He is not only the Creator of the world, but He is *my God!*

I dare say you have read—I have seen it many times—an account of a little boy tossed about in a boat which his father was steering. There came on a great storm. The sailors said to him, 'Aren't you afraid? See how high the waves are! hark! how the wind roars! Aren't you afraid?' 'I am not afraid,' was his reply, 'My father is at the helm.' He could say, '*My father!*'

The world's emperor is 'My God'. In all the difficulties of life, He is 'My Father'; and He is at the helm to guide me. 'He is the Lord my God.'

'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.'

II. Do you know how it is that we love God? What is the way to do it? I will tell you. Love comes from God on me; then it shines back again on Him. I must put myself where God can shine upon me; then His love shining upon me will make a reflection go back again to Him. There is no love to God without that. It is all God's love reflected back to Him.

Have not you sometimes seen the sun setting in the evening, and it has been shining so brightly on a house that you have thought, 'Really that house is on fire!' It was only the light of the sun shining back again the reflection. So if the love of God shines on your heart, then it will shine back in love to Him.

Did you ever go near a great high rock where there was an echo? You said a word, back it comes to you; you said, 'Come! come!' It said, 'Come! come!' It was an echo. It was your voice coming back to you. It is God's love that comes back to you when you love Him. It is not your love. You have no right to it. It is God's love shining upon you makes your love go back to Him. God's love touching you goes back to Him. That is the way. I hope you will so love God.

In one of the wars in which the Emperor Napoleon was engaged, we read that one of his old soldiers, a veteran, sustained a very bad wound, and the surgeon came to dress it and probe it. He was feeling it with his probe when the man said to the surgeon, 'Sir, go deep enough; if you go quite deep, you will find it at the bottom of my wound "emperor!"' It was all for the love of the emperor. 'You will find the word "emperor" at the bottom of my wound.' I wish I could think, in all our wounds, on everything we do, we could find quite at the bottom of it, 'I have got this wound for love of the Emperor. The love of my Emperor has given me this wound.' O that we might find at the bottom of everything, 'God!' 'God!'

I will tell you another thing. Many years ago there lived a schoolmaster in the Netherlands. It was at the time that a very wicked persecution was going on against the Protestants, when they had 'The Inquisition'. It was a very cruel thing. The inquisitors, as they were called, put this poor man

to the torture of the rack. They pulled his limbs almost asunder. This rack was a horrible instrument! have you ever seen one? You may see them in some museums. These inquisitors put men on the rack, and then pulled their joints out, thus putting them to horrible pain! When on the rack the inquisitor said to this poor schoolmaster, 'Do you love your wife and children? Won't you, for the sake of your wife and children, give up this religion of yours? Won't you give it up?' The poor old schoolmaster said, 'If this earth were all gold, if all the stars were pearls, and if that golden globe and those pearly stars were all mine, I would give them all up to have my wife and children with me. I would rather stay in this prison, and live on bread and water with my wife and children than live like a king without them. *But I will not* for the sake of pearls, or gold, or wife, or children, *give up my religion*, for I love my God more than wife or child, or gold or pearls.' But the inquisitors' hearts did not soften a bit; they went on inflicting more tortures till the man died on the rack. He loved God with 'all his mind, and soul, and heart, and strength'. Do you think *we* could go to the death for Him? If we love Him, we shall every day do something for Him. What have you done this day to show your love to God?

III. I should like to point you to a few ways by which we may show our love to God.

Supposing you had got a very dear friend—some one whom you loved very much—should you *like to be quite alone with that friend, and tell him your secrets*, and for him to tell you his secrets? Did you ever do that? If you have a friend, I am sure you would like to be quite alone with him and talk secrets. That is just what you will do with God if you love Him—you will like to be quite alone with Him; you will tell Him your secrets, and God will tell you His secrets. He has promised this, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him'. He will tell you things He does not tell to everybody. He will tell you things you have not heard before. He will whisper them into your heart. And you won't have a secret that you do not tell Him. If you have a naughty secret that you would not tell to anybody—you would not tell even me—go and tell it to God. If you love Him, you will be sure to do so.

I will tell you another thing. Do you know any body you love very much? if they go away from you, don't *you like to have a letter from them?* and when a letter does come, don't you read it from beginning to end without one wandering thought? I don't think you can say your lessons without a wandering thought; but if you had a letter from a dear friend, I think you would give it all your best attention—from the first word to the last. Well, is there a letter from God? Yes, Here it is—the Bible! It is a letter from God Himself. If you love God you will love His letter, and you will read it very lovingly and attentively, and give your whole mind to it.

I will tell you another thing. If you have a friend

you love very much, don't *you keep their birthday*? You know when their birthday is; you will do something for them on their birthday. Now God has not a birthday, because he never was born. He is 'from everlasting'. But He has got 'a day'. Your birthday is 'your day,' isn't it? You expect to get some presents on that day. We call Sunday 'the Lord's day'. If we love Him very much, we shall love His day; and you will keep the Sunday, love the Sunday, because it is God's Day.

I will tell you something else. If you have got a friend you love very much *you will like anybody who is like your friend*. You will say sometimes, 'I quite like that person, she is so like my mother; he is so like my friend'. You will love other Christian people, because you can say of them, 'They are so like my Jesus, so like my God. I will love them therefore.' So you will like poor people. I will tell you why. I will tell you a little story, I do not know whether you ever heard of it.

There was a gentleman who always used to say grace before dinner, and he used to say:—

Be present at our table, Lord  
Be here, and every where adored:

and his little child, his little boy, said, 'Papa, you always ask Jesus Christ to come and be present at our table, but He never comes. You ask Him every day, but He never does come.' His father said, 'Well, wait and see'. While at dinner that very day, there was a little knock at the door, given by a very poor man indeed, and he said, 'I am starving; I am very poor and miserable. I think God loves me, and I love God, but I am very miserable; I am hungry, wretched, and cold.' The gentleman said, 'Come in; come and sit down, and have a bit of our dinner'. The little boy said, 'You may have all my helping'. So he gave him all his helping; and a very nice dinner the poor man had. The father—after dinner—said, 'Didn't Jesus come? You said He never came. There was that poor man, and Christ said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it *unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me!*" Christ sends his representatives! What you have done to that poor man, it is the same as if you had done it unto God.'

Then I am sure if you love people very much *you will love to work for them*, and you will not mind how hard because you love them. If you love God, you will love to do something for God. Like Jacob felt about Rachel: 'he served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her'. It seemed a mere nothing, the time passed so quickly! He did not find it at all hard, because he loved her so much. Love makes everything easy.

I will tell you one more thing. If you love a person very much and he has gone away from you, *you will love to think he is coming back again*. You know there was a little boy whose bedroom window looked towards the east, and every day of his life, as soon as the little boy awoke, he leaped out of bed

and looked out of his window to see if Jesus was come. He was so longing for Jesus to come, because he loved Him so much. You will long for Him to come if you love Him.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### PURITY

'And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.'—MARK XIII. 37.

I WILL tell you a story, and it shall be a true one.

About a hundred years ago, when the English and French were fighting in North America, both of them wickedly used to have the savage Indian tribes to help themselves in the war. The English army was encamped on a certain plain; it was autumn, and the nights were long. The sentinels were set all round the camp, with their watch-fires as usual, to give alarm in case of any attack. One morning the sentinel at a particular post was found dead and cold, stabbed with an Indian knife in the back. It was thought he must have fallen asleep, and his comrades said that he was justly punished, for, as you know, it is death for a soldier to sleep at his post. And very justly too; because the carelessness of one sentinel may destroy a whole army. But the next morning the sentinel was again found dead at that same post, and in that same manner—stabbed in the back. It seemed impossible that two soldiers should have slept on two following nights, especially when the second one had such a fearful warning before him. And it seemed quite as impossible that an English soldier, with his loaded musket and fixed bayonet, could have been attacked and killed, if awake, by an Indian. The whole thing made, as you may imagine, a great noise in the camp. The third night one of the steadiest men in the regiment was told off as sentinel in that place, and went to his duty determined to find out the mystery. Well, what was the surprise in the camp when, next morning, he also was found stabbed in the same way. The general in command said that he could not afford to have his men sacrificed thus, and therefore that the following night, which was the fourth, two soldiers should be together in the watch. But a young officer went to him and begged to be allowed to take it himself; he said it was a disgrace that two Englishmen should be needed to fight an Indian. The general at last very unwillingly gave his consent, and the officer took his place. You may imagine how carefully he looked to the spring of his musket, and to the fixing his bayonet; and how, as his watch went on, he took care to keep plenty of wood burning on his fire. Well, in the dearest time of the night, between two and three o'clock, he noticed, about twenty yards off, a large black hog rooting up the ground this way and that after the manner of those beasts. But hogs were very common in that country, so he thought little about the matter, and quietly continued walking up and down his beat. Presently he noticed the animal again, this time about ten yards from him, very busy



in feeding. Still he went on walking up and down for a few minutes more, and behold there was the creature again, this time not more than five yards from him. And moreover he observed that whatever way he turned his back in walking, the thing, though still roofing up the ground diligently, moved a little closer in that direction. 'I don't quite like the looks of that beast,' he said to himself; and so he levelled his musket and fired. And an Indian sprang with a wild yell, and fell dead on the spot. It seems that he had disguised himself in a hog-skin, and as all Indians have such wonderful power of imitating animals, he contrived to get close up to the poor sentinels without their suspecting anything, and then, when their back was turned, to leap on and stab them. 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.'

I think that the hearts of every one of us are like a camp round which guards and sentinels must be set. Just as a camp contains many soldiers who are bound to serve their king, so our hearts have a great many different powers (have they not?) by all of which we ought to serve God. And I am sure we have enemies enough who seek to destroy us, and against each of these we have to set a sentinel, as it were, to keep watch.

The great danger came to those sentinels because they were not quite on their watch. Had they seen a man, then they would have been ready; but only to see a beast, and that beast seemingly feeding, what danger from that?

Now think of this. Remember that great and good king, the man after God's own heart, David. On one miserable, miserable afternoon, he who had said, 'Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity'—let them rest for half a minute on what they should not have seen. And what followed? That is now nearly three thousand years ago! Three thousand years! What kings and kingdoms have passed away and been forgotten? What battles have been fought that are now scarcely known by name! How many most holy and loving deeds have been done which will never be known till the end of all things! How many martyrs have been burnt, have been eaten by wild beasts, have been torn on the rack, whose names are forgotten! But not this sin. Here, up to this very day, in the writings of those unhappy men who say in their hearts, 'There is no God,' David's sin is always dwelt on. *This* is the man after God's own heart! This is he whose Psalms you so dearly love! Might not the prophet Nathan, speaking from God, well say, 'Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme!' And how little could David have told what that blasphemy would be!

I have spoken of our watch that we have to keep; of our sentinel that we have to set. Well; if one thing when we come to work it out, when we try to look thoroughly into it, seems so hard, what great need have we to take care of looking, as David says,

to all our steps—of every hour, and every minute of our lives, trusting to God's help, and not to our own,—of remembering the last commandment of our dear Lord to the multitude while He was on earth, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 70.

### WATCH-GATE

'And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.'—MARK XIII. 37.

I AM sure Jesus had a right to say what He did; see how He watched! You know He stayed awake all night; He prayed all night; I think I might say He cried all night. He had a right (hadn't He?) to say to us, 'Watch!' 'Watch!' He says, 'What I say unto you I say unto all'—to every boy and girl in this church—unto all, *Watch!*' He says it to me. Do you know what I am? Do you know what God calls me? 'A watchman.' He says to all His ministers, 'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman'. The angels 'watched'. Daniel saw them. He says, 'A watcher and an holy one came down from heaven'. And the angels are standing around us, 'watching' us now. Satan 'watches' us. Do you remember how he 'watched' Job? Satan 'watches'. God 'watches'. The angels 'watch'. There is such a beautiful verse in Daniel ix. 14, 'The Lord hath watched upon the evil'. There came trouble, and God 'watched' the trouble. How kindly He 'watched' it. And in his Epistle to the youngest person to whom a book in the Bible was written, young Timothy, though he was not perhaps so young as you, St. Paul says to him, 'Watch thou in all things'.

See now how everybody 'watches'. God watches; Satan watches; angels watch; clergymen watch; young men are to watch; boys and girls are to watch. Nine times in the New Testament we are told to watch. You may find them some other time if you like. It is a very important command—'What I say unto you, I say unto everybody, Watch!'

Let us think a little about it. If you were a midshipman in the Navy, you would have in your turn to walk up and down the deck three hours in the night. The sailors divide the night into 'four watches'; and if you were a midshipman you would have to do your 'watch'. When it came to your 'watch' you would have to walk up and down the deck, and woe betide you if you went to sleep! I fancy the first time you did so you would be flogged, and I am not quite sure, but I think that in time of war, in time of danger, if you slept during your 'watch' you would be shot! You must keep 'watch'. Why is that? Why have you got to 'watch'? Why is *this* called 'a watch' (Mr. Vaughan showing his watch)? Why is *this* called 'a watch'? It is to help me to 'watch' that I may know the time, that I may 'watch', that I may know (I was going to say) when to begin, and when to end? but I am never to end. Is it to keep 'the

watches of the night? We are all 'watchmen'. I have a question to ask you. God asks the question; hear it, my boy; hear it, my girl: 'Watchman, what of the night?' 'Watchman, what of the night?' If you were a midshipman, perhaps you would be asked that question on board a ship. Now I ask you, this night—for it is not day yet, heaven will be full day—I say to you, How are you getting on now in the night? 'Watchman, what of the night?' 'Watchman, what of the night?'

Supposing you knew there were some robbers coming to your house to-night, would not you watch? Would not you fasten the door very tightly? Would not you take care to put the bar up behind the shutters?

It is a great thing to have fences. When a farmer takes a farm, the first thing is to take care the fences and hedges are all good. Are your fences good? Now, if you knew a robber were coming to-night, would not you watch against the robber? There is a thief in this church who would rob us of our peace—our heaven—our everything. Then 'watch' against the thief! Take care the fences are all good. 'Watch!'

Who is your greatest enemy? Yourself, shall I say? or sin? Or are they very much the same thing? Well, I will say *sin*. Let us speak first about sin, and then about self.

*Sin*. Now, you know I was supposing just now that you were midshipmen. Suppose now that you were all soldiers, and I was the commanding officer, and that when I came round the camp I saw one place where I knew the enemy was going to attack us—what should I say to you, soldiers? 'Put a double guard there; the enemy is coming in at that point; put a double guard!' I will tell you of one or two fences where I think we want double guard—where the 'watch' should be doubled.

In bed, before you get up. It is rather a slippery place that, when you know you ought to get up and you turn round again instead. What is the consequence? When you do get up you dress all in a hurry and say no prayers. Therefore I would come to your bedside and say, 'Watch!' Take care! Don't lie in bed too long; don't neglect your prayers.

At breakfast, dinner, tea, supper, I come by, and I say, 'Take care! Perhaps you want the best all to yourself—perhaps you are greedy. Take care! Don't take the best to yourself.'

I go to another place. You are alone in a room. Take care! There is something sweet in the cupboard; there is sugar there. Take care! It is very dangerous to be alone, isn't it? 'Watch!' 'Watch!' 'Watch!'

You take a walk, not with a good companion; or you are playing with a bad companion. Take care! The scarlet fever is very catching. Sin is more catching than the scarlet fever. 'Watch!'

There is some one in this church now who did not 'watch' this morning. Some boy or girl taught him

some bad thing; asked you to do something that you know is wrong. Take care when in company. 'Watch!'

Oh! there are so many places where we must watch. There was a city in Italy, I dare say you know of it, where, more than a thousand years ago, the lava from Mount Vesuvius came all over the city and covered it completely with thick lava. I have been there and seen it. A thousand years after that happened it was discovered, the city was excavated, and they dug out many of the things that were therein. Amongst other things that were discovered there was a man, a soldier, a sentinel at his post. A thousand years before that man had been killed at his post by the lava, and there he was found, a sentinel still at his post! A lesson to us. A great deal more than a thousand years after he was found still at his post. Let us be found at our post, wherever God has placed us, when He comes; when this world is covered, as it will be, with fire, may we be found faithful at our posts!

I should like to tell you a little more about 'watching'. I have said sin is a great enemy, always coming to us; but ask yourself, *Haven't you a real enemy in yourself?* Has anybody in the world so great an enemy as himself? Did we ever examine, see in a microscope, the eye of a little fly? A wonderful thing is the eye of a fly. You cannot, at one time, look backwards and forwards; but a fly can look every way at once. Now you must be like that. You must look every way. This way, that way, every way.

You must 'watch'. If you do not 'watch', very likely the danger will come where you do not think. And I will tell you where you must begin. Do you think you yet know what is your besetting sin? I mean, do you think you know what sin you are most likely to do? Think. I don't want you to tell me; it is between you and God. Do you think you know? I wonder what it is—what is your besetting sin—your greatest danger? Do you think it is temper? Perhaps it is; I don't know. Do you think it is gluttony? or being false, deceiving? or pride? You are very proud. Boys and girls are quite as proud as men and women. Do you think it is pride? I don't know what it is. But this I say, I am sure you have a besetting sin. Every one has got a besetting sin. The Bible says so: 'Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us'. Therefore every one in this church has got a besetting sin. Ask God to show you, and then, when you have found out where your besetting sin is, there set a double guard. 'Watch!' If your besetting sin is bad temper, if you are easily irritated and you know you are, then 'watch'; whenever you feel it coming, suppose you say a little prayer: 'O God! don't let me be angry. O God! keep me from this temper.' It is wonderful what that will do. Bad temper always springs from pride; you think you are not treated with proper respect. Therefore think, 'Who am I, to be angry, who have done so

many wrongs?' Just set about that; keep a watch there.

Every sin comes in a little at first; then it comes in more. If you 'watch' at first, at the beginning, you will conquer it; if not, it will conquer you. Therefore, 'watch' at the beginning. Say a little prayer.

Oh! the danger may come in a very different way from the way you expect. Did you ever read Æsop's Fables? I will tell you one of a doe that was blind of one eye (have you read the story?); this doe was very cunning and clever, for she knew which eye was blind, and down the path which the doe used to go she always kept her blind eye to the sea and her good eye to the land, because it was from the land the doe thought the danger would come. So the doe always kept the blind eye to the sea and the good eye to the land. One day a poacher, who knew all about that, got a boat and went out in the boat on the sea, and from the boat he shot the poor doe; and as the poor doe was dying, she said, so the fable goes, 'Unhappy watcher! poor me! My danger came from where I never expected it, and there was no danger where I did expect it!' You may be like that poor blind doe: *the danger comes where you don't expect it!*

Do you know where to expect the danger? 'Watch!'

I believe a hare when it lies in the grass always tries to see out of its eyes backwards; he thinks the danger will come from behind, therefore he so fixes his eyes and puts his ears back that he cannot see what is before; he is always looking back. *Your danger comes every way.*

Another thing I want you to watch against is *wandering thoughts*. Are there any wandering thoughts in this church now? Is everybody thinking about the sermon? About good things? No, no; there are wandering thoughts.

I have heard it asked, 'If everybody had to go out of church as soon as the first wandering thought came into the mind, would there be anybody left in the church?' If every wandering thought slammed the door as it left, the noise would be like thunder! Guard against wandering thoughts. Remember what Abraham did: when he offered up the sacrifice, and the little birds came to spoil it, he drove away the birds that they might not spoil the sacrifice!

These wandering thoughts are like the little naughty birds which came down upon Abraham's sacrifice. You must drive away the little wandering thoughts.

A lady was once in company with Dr. Johnson; she said to him that she 'could not get rid of bad thoughts'. Dr. Johnson said, 'Madam, you should be always on your watch'. She said, 'We cannot be always on our watch'. He said, 'Nobody ever goes to heaven who is not always on their watch in this world'. Those were very wise words of that wise man.

Now, I must just say, before I have done, that, as I have told you what you are to watch against, we must see what we are to watch for. I shall mention four things.

*Watch for answers to your prayers.* Say your prayers and then look up for the answers to come. Expect answers. Look for them. When you shoot your arrows, look to see where your arrow comes down. For prayer is like shooting an arrow. Look for answers to prayer. That is the first thing.

The second thing I would advise you is, *always to look for little, still, small voices*. I knew a little girl who said to her mother, 'Mother, let us sit quiet and try if we cannot hear the angels singing'. Now, however still we may sit, we shall never hear the angels sing till we get to heaven. But if we are still, if our hearts are still, we shall hear voices, voices that speak in us, the Holy Spirit speaking in our consciences. And if we listen for them, you will always hear these voices; and these voices will always tell you what is right. Watch for the Spirit's still, small voices.

I will tell you another thing to watch for. *Watch for God's providences*. Expect there will be some providence, some kind thing God will do. Look out for it. There is an old proverb, and a good one: '*He that watches Providence will never want a providence to watch*'. Do you know any very poor person in great distress? Tell them that.

And lastly, *watch for Jesus Christ's coming again*. 'Watch!' I do not know whether I ever told you about a little boy who had heard about Jesus coming again. He was very full of it, he thought a great deal about it. He slept in a bedroom where the window looked to the east, and as he had been told that Jesus Christ would come in the east (as I believe He will), every morning when that little boy turned out of bed, before he ever took off his nightgown, he ran to the window and looked to the east to see if Jesus was coming.

Those are my four things you should watch for. Watch for answers to prayer; watch for still, small voices; watch for kind providences; watch for Christ's second coming. Oh, won't you be glad when He comes again! Every one of you, go up to your watch-tower, hang upon your watch-tower. We read in Isaiah of a man being sent up to his watch-tower, and when there he said, 'I see a lion in the way'. If you are on your watch-tower you will see a lion. You will see a good Lion and a bad lion. You will see a bad lion, who is full of evil, who would hurt and destroy you if he could; and a great and good Lion, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah,' He will do great things for you, so that you will become strong, like giants! Keep on your watch-tower! Be ever on your watch-tower! If you have gone wrong, it is because you were not on your watch-tower! 'Watch!' 'Watch!' 'WATCH!' 'Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.'—JAMES VAUGHAN.



## READINESS

'Ready, aye Ready.'

'What I say unto you I say unto all. Watch!'—MARK XIII. 37.

The story of the origin of this motto is as follows. It is said that when James V. of Scotland was on the eve of advancing against the English, and had assembled his nobles at Fala, none of them were willing to follow the royal standard with the single exception of Sir John Scott, who expressed his readiness to serve with his king in any circumstances. The monarch, in token of his pleasure at Sir John's loyalty, granted him the right to add a sheaf of spears to his coat of arms, and also the above motto. In Sir Walter Scott's poem, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel,' he thus alludes to the story:—

Hence, in fair remembrance worn,  
You sheaf of spears his crest has borne;  
Hence his high motto stands revealed,  
'Ready, aye Ready,' for the field.

I mean to take the words this morning as expressive of three things: (1) of the spirit that should mark us all; (2) of the attitude always assumed by the powers of evil; and (3) of the constant character of Christ.

*First*, of ourselves.

The quality of readiness is the one that more almost than any other ensures success in life. The man who succeeds is the man who is capable of seizing every advantage and opportunity. We can see in our school life how quickness tells; it is not everything, but it is a great deal. The boy or girl who not only has learned the tasks well, but is ready witted enough to apply the knowledge gained to the various questions and problems that come up for solution, wins the highest place; and in our games how true it is that the quick eye and the ready hand gain the mastery in the cricket, football, or hockey field. And when we come to the higher levels of life, we find how this quality is more than ever essential. Paul makes it part of his Christian armour, and sets it alongside truth, righteousness, and faith,—none of these great gifts of the soul can be used effectively without the quality of readiness. No one that is unprepared, no matter how highly gifted, can make the most efficient use of his gifts; it is like having immense riches all locked up in some strong room of which the owner has lost the key. One of the kings in English history has been branded with a very ugly name because he was always lacking in that quality of preparedness; he has been known to all subsequent ages as Ethelred the Unready. Let us see to it that we do not gain such a title for ourselves in the more serious and strenuous duties that belong to Christ's kingdom.

*Secondly*, of the forces of evil.

These, we are told, are always on the outlook seeking to surprise us; Peter says our adversary is 'as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour'. This attitude of fierce and prowling menace is characteristic of the powers of evil. You

know what travellers do in South Africa, when they camp for the night they have to take great care that watch-fires are lit all round, and beyond the glow of the fires can be heard the movements of the lions and other fierce beasts of prey. If by any chance the fires are allowed to die down, then the wild animals spring into the circle and carry away some unfortunate sleeper in their teeth. They will hang about for hours in the hope of an entrance, and nothing but the dawn will drive them back to the desert.

Now, sin is a foe of this kind, it is both merciless and persistent; it will not spare, neither will it leave us alone so long as there seems an opportunity of finding a weak spot in our armour. In the old duelling days one method pursued by the combatants was for one swordsman to harass and press his enemy until he had utterly fatigued him, and then to take advantage of his temporary weakness by a swift and sudden thrust. These are the tactics the devil often adopts in dealing with us; he wearies us until we are found off our guard, then he enters. There is great need therefore of watchfulness, for we have not only to resist the evil, but to carry the war into the enemies' camp.

*Thirdly*, of Christ.

Away on one of the northern shores of Scotland, where the cliff faces the wild sea, is a lifeboat house, with the words *Ready, aye Ready* upon it; could there be a finer motto for lifeboat men! It seems as if the boat were itself expressing the purpose for which it exists, and the eagerness with which it desires to go out on its errands of mercy. No matter how terrible the storm, how wild the night, how great the risk, the lifeboat has always its prow turned to the waves, and is in readiness to be launched. Just thus it is with Jesus Christ: you remember how when His disciples were in dire straits He appeared to them walking on the waves of Galilee, and straightway the storm became a calm, and the frightened seamen were in safety. Wherever Christ sees darkness, danger, and sin there He is always ready to put out to the rescue. The greater our need, the more certain are we of having His help.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 111.

## ON DOING WHAT WE CAN

'She hath done what she could.'—MARK XIV. 8.

Nobody is idle in the kingdom of our Lord. Even the babes and sucklings have something to do. But so just is the King that He will not have any of His servants do more than they can. He expects us to do only what we can.

'What we can.' That is His measure for all work done to Him. What we have strength for, what we have health for, what we have cleverness for, what we have time for, what we have means for: that and nothing more. He will have us work up to that, but no higher.

He must have been thinking of little people and children when He made this the measure of work. Almost it is as if He had said, 'I will not make My

service hard to anyone, but least of all to the little ones of My kingdom'.

It was this which pleased Him so well in the service which Mary of Bethany did: she did what she could. She greatly loved the Lord. He had often spoken to her about His Father. He had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. And she wanted to show her love.

She took this way of showing it. All the money she could spare she spent on a box of sweet-scented oil. And one Sabbath evening—the last Sabbath before His death—the Lord was in Bethany and at supper in the house of Simon, Mary came in with her box. And going near to Jesus, she did to Him what was only done to kings and great people—she poured the sweet-scented oil upon His head and over His feet. And then, in her great love, she wiped His feet with her hair.

It was not much to do. To look at, it was not so much as if she had built a church, or a school, or a hospital. It was not even so much, Judas said angrily, as if she had sold the ointment and given the money to the poor. It was only pouring some sweet perfume on the head and feet of the Saviour she loved. But just this was the thing she could best do; and what she could she did. Of all His disciples then living, only into the heart of this one had come the thought to do this thing. She had love so great for Jesus, and He had become so truly her King, that it seemed to her a blessed work to buy the oil and pour it upon His head. She would have done more if she could; but this was in her heart to do, and it was done. The Lord did not despise it or think it a little thing. When Judas and others were blaming her, He said, 'She hath wrought a good work upon me. . . . She hath done what she could.' He praised her. And then, in His kindness, and praising her still more He said, 'that what she had done would be talked of wherever His Gospel should be preached'. And so it has fallen out. That evening the fragrance of her ointment filled the house where they were sitting; and its fragrance, in a still better way—the good influence that was in it—has filled the house of the Lord ever since.

II. When years had gone past, and Jesus was gone back to heaven, many other disciples showed their love to Him by doing what they could. Some sold their possessions, and gave the money they got for them to the poor. Some went about the world preaching Jesus. Some opened their houses to receive the preachers. Some spent long hours in prayer, asking God to bless the preaching. Some, more noble than others, searched the Bible besides to know what God would have them to do. Among these was Dorcas of Joppa.

Joppa was a seaport town, and full of sailors; and where sailors are there will also be women and children who are poor. Often ships went out from the harbour that never came back. They were caught by storms and sunk far out at sea, or they were driven shoreward and broken on the rocks. And day after day

mothers and children on the shore would look with straining eyes to the sea for white sails which could never more be seen. And sometimes, when all hope had perished of seeing these sails again, the streets would be filled with wailing. And sometimes it might be widows would go past the door where Dorcas lived wringing their hands in agony because news had come to them that the fathers of their children had been swallowed up by the terrible sea.

And seeing these poor people by day, and lying awake perhaps sometimes on stormy nights and thinking of brave sailors perishing, even then, at sea, this Christian lady said to herself, 'Can I do anything to help?' And taking herself to task she found there was one thing she could do. She could sew. She could make coats and garments—upper and under clothes. There was another thing she could do, although she herself might not think of that. She had a heart filled with tenderness and pity. She could let forth some of that pity and tenderness on the poor people in their sorrow. And these two things she did. She drew the poor widows about her by her love. And with her own hands she made clothing for them and theirs. To some people it might not seem a very great work. It was only a little sewing and some human love; only a kind word for sad hearts and clothing for the naked. But that is work which is very dear to Christ. And it was work of this kind He had given her the power to do. And what she could, she did. And of so much worth seemed her work in the eyes of Jesus, that when she died early, and the poor widows she had clothed cried to Him, through Peter, to let their dear one—their friend—come back to them, He granted their prayer; and by the hands of His servant Peter raised her up again to life.

III. Sometimes we can only sing a psalm, or offer a prayer, or speak a kind word, or give a tender look, or a warm grasp of the hand. It is enough in the eyes of the just Saviour that we do things as little as these, if these should be the only things we can do.

I am reminded, while I speak, of two workers for Christ I once knew, who gained their bread in a cotton mill, and served Him in a very simple way. One of these, her companions used to call 'the gentle Mary'. She was a Roman Catholic. She was very tender about sick people, and spent what she could spare of her evenings, after mill hours, in visiting them. She had a way of speaking to the sick that did them good. Not that she was a great speaker. Often she would only say to them, 'Jesus loves you'. Sometimes she just pressed their hands. Sometimes she bent over them and kissed them. She never went on these visits of kindness without taking something she thought the sick people would like. It would be a little jelly one time; and a little scent-bottle next time; and now and again it would be a flower, or a little wine. The door was open for Mary into many a home where these things were to be had for the asking. I am happy to be able to add, that Mary was as gentle and loving at her own fireside as in the homes of the sick.

It was another kind of service to which the second girl had given herself. One winter evening she was going home from the factory, and in the light falling from a street lamp on the pavement she found a six-penny copy of the New Testament. It was the first time she had a Testament of her own. She took it home and began to read, and as she read, she learned, as she had never done before, the wonder of the Saviour's love, and how He had died to prove that love. She said to herself, 'I shall not have this joy to myself alone'. So she set apart, out of her small earnings, one penny every day for Christ's cause. And at the end of each week she bought and gave to some one who had none a copy of the book which had been such a joy to herself.

It was not much either of these girls did. It was not much either had the power to do. But each did what she could: that was their praise before God.

That was the praise also of a young lady I was once taken to see, whose service seemed even less than theirs. She had been thrown from a carriage ten years before, and all those years had been ill and in bed. But her hands were free. And with her free hands she knit little gloves for poor children. It was only helping to keep warm some little fingers that would otherwise have been very cold in winter. But it was all she was able to do. And it was done with a loving heart, and as a service to the Lord.

IV. No one is so humble, or poor, or weak, as not to be able to do something. Even a child can serve the Lord.

A few years back, on a Friday morning in September, three tiny little children in Australia went into a wood to fetch some broom for their mother. It was a beautiful day. The ground was covered with flowers, and the children set themselves to gather them. But when they were tired with this, and had prepared the little bundle for home, they could no longer tell on what side home was to be found. And Frank, the youngest of the three, was worn out. Taking him up in her arms, the sister and other brother looked on every side for a way out, but could not find one. Mile after mile those weary feet pattered, and every mile was taking them farther from home. They cried for father and mother. 'Coocy, Coocy, Coocy,' they called; but all in vain. There was no human ear to hear their cries. At last night began to fall. The sister looked for a sheltering bush. Then she knelt down with her other brother and said her evening prayer;—

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,  
Look upon a little child.

Then the two lay down beside Frank and went to sleep. And this was repeated on Saturday, on Sunday, on Monday, and Tuesday, the poor weary wanderers still carrying the broom for their mother, still looking for the home which they could not find, and eating berries and leaves for food. By and by the beautiful weather came to an end and rain poured down, and when night came Frank was cold as well as

wearry. The sister took off her frock, and, wrapping the child in that, they once more took shelter under a bush. It was nine days altogether before they were found. Father, mother, neighbours, shepherds, farmers, miners, everybody in the neighbourhood searched for them. But some natives, going down on their knees, and looking for the marks of tiny feet on the wet ground, were the first to come on their track. On Saturday, led by these poor blacks, their father found them lying asleep under a bush, and nearly dead with weariness and hunger and cold. The first words the girl said when she was roused up were 'cold, cold,' and the next, after she had been taken to a hut and warmed and fed, were the words of her Evening Hymn.

The brave little mother that she was! The brave self-forgetting servant of Christ! She had cheered her brothers all the time. She had searched about for food for them. She carried Frank when he was tired. She wrapped him in her own dress when he was cold. And at night, when they went to sleep under the shelter of some bush, she drew them together and said her evening prayer.

That was her praise before God and man: she had done what she could.

V. It is wonderful how much can be done, and what things great in God's sight, if people would only do the little things they can.

On one of the early days of a January not long ago, a Swedish steamer was wrecked on the Northumberland coast. The fisher folk of Cresswell, a village near by, looking seaward that day, saw the strange vessel among the breakers, and knew that human lives were in peril. It is a little place, with only fifteen men in it, and of these two were unable to work. But men, women, and children turned out that day and hauled down and launched the lifeboat, and, very soon, thirteen brave fellows were struggling with the wild sea to save the lives on the wreck. But the storm was too fierce. They were driven back again and again. While they were waiting for a lull in the storm to try again, some one said, 'Let us send for the rocket'. The rocket is used when the lifeboat cannot get near. It is shot up into the air with a line of cord attached, so that the cord falls over the vessel, and those on board catch it and pull in a rope tied to the end of it, and make that fast, and come sliding one by one to land by the rope. But the machine for firing the rocket was at Newbiggin, five miles away, and the night was closing in. Would anybody go to Newbiggin? A young girl stepped forward. She would go. And in a moment she was gone. The lives of human beings depended on her speed. She ran, rather she flew. Like the fisher-girl she was, she kept the shore road, and to gain time took many a short cut through the bays on the way. The wild sea was on the one side drenching her with its spray; on the other, was the wild lonesome land, and above and around her the deepening night. But on she flew, this young angel of mercy, between rocks and waves, through the surf, through the moaning



of the storm, through the darkness, till she gave her message at Newbiggin, and saw the rocket on its way. And then, alone as before, and once more through darkness, sea-wave, and storm, she fled back over the same five lonesome miles to bring the good news to Cresswell, that the rocket was on the way. It did not lessen the worth of what she had done that meanwhile the lifeboat had succeeded in its next attempt, and brought the wrecked people safe to land. Her deed was well done and heroic. She was ill next day, ill and cramped all over in bed. No wonder. But she had done a brave, noble, Christian deed, and done it well. It is fine to be able to tell that she comes of a good stock, for her father was steersman of the lifeboat that day. And for father and child, and for all in Cresswell who worked so well, it may surely be said, 'They wrought a good work, they did what they could'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 47.

### OF NOT DOING WHAT WE CAN

'She hath done what she could.'—MARK XIV. 8.

THE last time I spoke to you, I tried to set before you the good which there is in doing what we can. To do what one can is all that our Lord asks us to do. And it is very pleasant to know that this is all He asks us to do. It is like having His heart opened to us, and seeing how tender He is to little folks and children, and to people not strong, and poor people. And I really think it was to let us see this tenderness of His heart for the little ones that He made this His praise of Mary, 'She hath done what she could'.

I. But to this lesson there are two sides. And it is right to know that the same kind Lord Who has made this easy measure for little workers, expects all His workers, big and little, to work up to it and do for Him as much as they are able. He will not lay upon any of us more than we can do. But what we can, He will always have us to do. He does not love idlers, nor people who run away from duty. He told this story to let us know the evil of not doing what we can:—

There was once a merchant who had to go to a far country. And he called his servants and said to them: 'Here is money, and when I am away you are to trade with it and make more, and when I come back, I will reckon with you'. And he gave one ten pounds, one five, and to a third he gave one. When he came back, after a long while, the servant who got ten pounds said: 'I traded with your ten pounds, and I have made other ten'; and the servant who got five said, 'And I have made other five'. The master was well pleased with them. But the servant who had got only one, said: 'I was afraid lest I should lose your money, and have a scolding from you, so I hid it, and here it is safe'. With that servant the master was very angry. He said to him, 'You ought not to have buried my pound; you should have traded with it, and made it into two pounds'. It was for this the master was angry.

The servant was an idler. He did not do what he could.

II. And that is always and for all mankind an evil thing. And sometimes it is as cruel as it is evil.

I will tell you a little bit of the life of a boy I knew. He was not a bad boy. He was far from it. He loved good people and things that were good. He would not have told a lie, or knowingly done a mean or cruel thing. Yet once he did a thing that was very cruel through forgetting to do what he could. A friend had made him a present of a blackbird. At first, there was no end to his joy. This was his own bird: its cage was his; its song was his; and it was to him the bird looked for its food. And for a long while he was very good to it. He kept green things between the wires, and brought fresh water to its drinking glass, and kept the cage clean and sweet; and always when he came in, he would go up to the cage and speak to it and cheer it, and sometimes he would rise from his lessons and have a little talk with his bird.

It happened that the boy's mamma took ill, and the song of the blackbird became a pain to her. So the cage was taken up to an attic room. It happened at the same time that the game of base-ball came in, and my little friend was very fond of that game. He got to care for this game so much that his care for the lonely blackbird grew less and less. He had no time now for little talks with the bird. He did not gather green food for it, or bring it fresh water as he used to do. At last, one day he forgot it altogether. He had to hurry off to school as soon as he rose next day. In the afternoon his classmates took him off to the playground. He came back so hot and tired and so late that he could only get to bed. His poor bird went out of his thoughts entirely. And when, two or three days after, some one in the family said, 'Harry, how is your blackbird getting on?' a pang shot through Harry's heart. He jumped up, ran to the attic where he had left it, and found it lying at the bottom of the cage quite dead. By his forgetfulness and neglect and not doing what he could, he had killed his beautiful bird.

III. And it is not birds only that are neglected in this way.

A poor old lady, who lived where I once lived, had some trouble in one of her eyes, Scales seemed to grow over it, and she could not see. The village doctor said to her, 'It is but a little thing, and it can be healed'. They sent her to an hospital in the neighbouring city, and the doctors there said, 'Yes, it is a little thing, and your eye shall get quite well'. So she said a silent prayer to God, and put herself in their hands. They took a knife and cut the scales away. And she felt the touch of the light on her eye, and said joyfully, 'I see with this eye again'. The doctors wrapped up the eye, and said to a nurse, 'Nurse, this patient must remain in a dark room for two weeks; at the end of this time she should be well enough to go home'.

It was the duty of the nurse to whom these words were said to attend to all whose eyes had been cut, and put them at once into a warm bed, and give them food. She took this old lady to a dark room, and said, 'Rest here; I will be back in a moment and put you to bed'. But moment after moment passed, and she did not come back. Hour after hour, and still she did not come. She had forgotten all about her. At last, in the evening, she remembered her neglect, and ran up to the room where the old lady was. But it was too late. The day had been cold. The poor lady was cold, and sick, and faint. When she was put to bed she began to shiver. A fever set in; then inflammation of the eye that had been cut; then inflammation of the eye that was well. And when the sickness left her, both eyes were blind.

What had taken place? A very evil thing. This nurse had not done what she could; and, failing to do that, she had made her poor sick patient blind for life.

IV. I try to think that this nurse only forgot. I try to think that the evil she did—and what she did was very evil—was because she did not think as much as she ought to have done about her duties. But I have known of some who brought suffering on others just as she did, by not doing what they could, and who have tried to hide the evil they did by running away from the suffering they caused.

One dark night a few years ago, an emigrant ship, with four hundred people on board, was lying in the Channel on the eve of sailing to Hobart Town far away. And in the darkness, without stroke of warning, it was crashed into by a steamer and sunk. A dark night, I said, only a few stars twinkling, and those four hundred human beings were folded up in sleep. And in the darkness, and while they slept, there was this crash. And in a moment death was rushing in through the broken sides of the vessel, and almost instantly the vessel began to sink. Fathers, mothers, little babies, sailors, awoke only to be swallowed up in the yawning sea. It was one of the most pitiful things that could be—and very pitiful were the cries of the poor sufferers as they were going down into the deep. One mother came up to one on deck and cried, 'For the love of God,

save my baby!' But the baby and mother had both to die. A father and two sons met in the water. The elder son said, 'Father, let me kiss you for my last; for we shall all be drowned'. And all were drowned. The brave captain sent his young wife into one of the boats; but he himself remained to help and die at his task.

And while this was going on, and the crowded ship was settling down, what was the steamer that had given the stroke of death doing? It is shameful to have to tell it. But the steamer that caused those deaths steamed past, and on into the darkness. And human hands that might have helped, and a vessel that might have saved hundreds of lives, went cruelly past 'on the other side'.

The officers of that ship did not what they could. They could have taken better care; they could have had a better outlook; they could have kept further off. And when they had, what should have been a great grief to them, the grief of striking the ship in their path, they should have stopped and done all that human beings could do to save the lives in the ship. The Lord's measure applied to them is this: 'They wrought an evil work, and did not what they could to repair it'.

And at the great judgment day that will be a terrible sorrow for them and all who have done as they did. The people who shall be condemned that day will be people who could have worked for God, and did not, and who had talents, and did not use them.

And we should all know, and lay it to heart now, that the things which the Lord will ask us about on that day are all simple things, and things easy to do. And the condemnation on those who shall be condemned will be because those easy things were not done. They could have helped when help was needed; they could have had pity on the blind; they could have saved the drowning from death; they could have given bread to the hungry, or water to the thirsty, or clothes to the naked, or pity to the sick, or help to the prisoner. And surely it will be very awful to hear the gracious and loving Jesus saying, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 61.

## ST. LUKE

### JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE MODEL OF GREATNESS

'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.'—LUKE I. 15.

GABRIEL, the angel, was sent by God to speak the above words to Zacharias the priest, the father of John the Baptist. It was in the Temple at Jerusalem, while he was offering incense before the altar, that the angel appeared to him. He told him that he was about to have a son, and that he must call his name John. Then he told him what sort of work he was to do. He was to go before Christ—the Messiah, as the morning star goes before the sun, to prepare His way before Him. And then he told him what sort of a man he should be: 'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord'.

And when our Saviour was on earth, in speaking of John the Baptist one day, He said: 'Of them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist'. The angel Gabriel, and Jesus, the Lord of the angels, both spake of John the Baptist in the highest terms. They show us that, up to the time in which he lived, he was really the greatest man the world had known. And in view of what is thus said about him, when we come to put John the Baptist among the 'Bible Models,' we may well speak of him as—

*The model of greatness.* And in studying this model, there are *two* points of view from which we may look at it. One of these is the *negative* view of it, or in what John's greatness did *not* consist. The other is the *positive* view of it, or in what John's greatness *did* consist.

And in looking at this model from the negative point of view, there are *three* things to speak of. The first is that—

I. John's greatness did **Not Consist in Long Life.**—He was born about six months before our Saviour. He lived a private life, till he was thirty years of age. This was the age at which the Jewish priests and prophets generally began their work in public. And it was at this age that John began his work, as the forerunner of Christ. He came among his countrymen, crying aloud: 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'. He told them of the coming of the long-promised Messiah—the Saviour of the world; thus he prepared the way before Him. He began to preach, about six months before Jesus entered on His ministry; and he went on telling the people about Him, and pointing them to Him for about a year longer. Then he was beheaded by the wicked Herod; and *that* was the end of John's ministry. About eighteen months was all the

time he had to work for Jesus. And yet the angel said he should be 'great in the sight of the Lord'. And *he was* thus great. But then we see that it was *not long life* which made John the Baptist great.

Two things that helped to make John great were—doing what he knew was right, and bringing souls to Jesus. And these things will make any one great in God's sight. But it does not require long life to do these things.

II. In the next place, this greatness does not require **Great Riches.**—John the Baptist was a poor man. We see this in the clothes he wore when he began his ministry, and in the food on which he lived. We are told by St. Matthew (iii. 4) that 'John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey'. This was just the kind of food and clothing which the poorest people of that country had. John owned no land. He never had a house of his own to live in. He had no money with which to buy anything that was costly or expensive. And yet, in spite of his poverty, John was 'great in the sight of the Lord'. And this sort of greatness we may all have if we serve God as John did. Some men are rich without being great; and some are great without being rich.

*A servant girl's greatness.*—One of the best and greatest men in England was the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was well known through all the country as the helper of the poor and the oppressed. He took an active part in every good work. He was for years a blessing to the whole country: and every one who knew him was and is always ready to speak his praises. He was not only very good and great, but also very rich; and he used his riches to help others in many ways. But the Earl of Shaftesbury owed all his goodness and his greatness under God to a poor servant girl. When he was an infant his mother had a faithful servant girl in her family, whose name was Mary Millas. His mother appointed Mary to be the nurse of the young Earl, and gave her the entire charge of him. She knew what an important position he would have to occupy when he grew to be a man, and she made up her mind to be faithful to the great trust committed to her charge. She felt very much as the mother of Moses did, when God, through Pharaoh's daughter, said to her, 'Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages'. She was an earnest Christian, and she determined to do all in her power to make that child a follower of Jesus. She prayed for him continually, with all her heart. She set before him a



good example. As soon as he was able to learn she taught him in a simple and attractive way the story about Jesus, and the truth wrapped up in that story. She kept on doing this very faithfully till the young Earl was seven years old, and then she died. But the seed she had sown so carefully in his heart took root there, and sprang up, and brought forth abundant fruit. He never forgot the example she had set before him, and the lessons she had taught him in those early years of his life. He became a Christian when he was quite young. He grew up in the way in which he had been so early led. And for years he was known and honoured all through England. No one can tell how much good he was the means of doing. But the faithful work which Mary Millas did for the young Earl was the cause of it all. She was truly great in what she did for him. And we may well speak of that poor servant girl as an example of greatness without riches.

III. But again, **The Greatness of John the Baptist did not Consist of 'the Honour that Cometh from Man'**.—Men often call persons great, when they are really not so at all.

There was a famous person, of whom we read in history. He lived in the time of Henry VIII., King of England, and was known as Cardinal Wolsey. He was a poor boy, the son of a butcher. But he got into college. He entered the ministry. He was rector of several churches. He became a favourite with King Henry VIII., who made him his Prime Minister. Then he was made Bishop: then Archbishop of York; then he was made Lord Chancellor; and finally the Pope of Rome appointed him Cardinal—which was the highest office he had in his power to give to any one. Thus Cardinal Wolsey had all the honour that cometh from man. But what good did it do him? In a single day he lost it all, and all his riches too, and died—a poor, miserable, heart-broken creature. And just before he died, he is said to have spoken these words to a friend who was near him:—

O Cromwell, Cromwell! had I but served my God  
With half the zeal with which I've served my king,  
He would not now have forsaken me.

The greatness of John the Baptist was very different from that of Cardinal Wolsey. Men had nothing to do with it. He was great in the sight of the Lord. And this is the only greatness that is worth having.

And this greatness we can all have, if we seek it in the right way. Let us look at an illustration of this kind of greatness. The story may be called—

*The name of the good Samaritan.*—Many years ago a good and faithful minister, whose name was Oberlin, was labouring among the high Alps. On one occasion he was travelling on foot in the winter time. The snow was deep, and the weather very cold. Weary with his journey, faint and hungry, and overcome by the cold, the poor minister felt

that he could not struggle any longer. He dropped on the snow and fell asleep. If he had been left there a little while, he never would have wakened again in this world. But he had not slept long before he was roused by some one shaking him, and calling to him.

It was a Swiss peasant, who had seen him, as he was driving by in his sleigh, and had stopped to help him. He gave him some wine to drink, and some food to eat, and then lifted him into his sleigh, and drove him to the next village.

M. Oberlin felt that he owed his life to the great kindness of this stranger; and he was at a loss how properly to thank him for what he had done. He offered him money, but he refused to take it.

'It is our duty to help one another,' said the peasant, 'and it is almost an insult to offer to pay a man for any such service.'

'Well,' replied Oberlin, 'at least tell me your name, that I may tell it to the Lord in my prayers.'

'I see you are a minister of the Gospel,' said the peasant. 'Will you please tell me the name of the good Samaritan?'

'I can't do that,' said the minister, 'for his name was never told.'

'Then let my name go with his,' was the peasant's reply; 'we'll leave them both together with the Lord.'

That good Swiss peasant and the good Samaritan had neither of them any of 'the honour that cometh from man,' but, like John the Baptist, they had the honour which cometh from God. They were 'great in the sight of the Lord,' and that is the best sort of greatness.

Thus we have taken the *negative* view of John's greatness, and have tried to show in *what it did not consist*.

It did not consist—in long life—in great riches—or in the honour that cometh from man.

And now, let us take the *positive* view of John's greatness, or in what it *did* consist. And there are three things to speak of under this head.

One thing that helped to make John great in the sight of the Lord was *his humility*. John was very humble. We see this in several things. We see it in what he said of himself, when the Jews sent messengers from Jerusalem, after he had been preaching some time, to ask him who he was. His answer was, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness'. He did not say—I am a prophet, or—I am the forerunner of Christ. He simply said, 'I am a *voice*'—a little breath put in motion—that's all. How humble John was!

And we see his humility again in what he said about Christ. 'After me,' said he, 'cometh One mightier than I: One who was preferred before me; whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.' How humble John was!

One time, when Dr. Morrison, the celebrated

missionary to China, found the work there too much for him, he wrote home to his friends in Scotland, and asked them to send him out an assistant. The managers of the missionary society inquired for a suitable person to send out to China. Their attention was directed to a young man of Aberdeen, who was said to be a person of great piety and industry.

He was called before the committee who had charge of this business. They had a long talk with him. Then he withdrew from the committee, and left them to talk it over among themselves.

After he was gone, one of the gentlemen of the committee said: 'I don't think that young man will answer our purpose at all. He's too plain and rough.'

Finally, one of them suggested, that even if they did not send the young man out as a missionary, it might do very well to send him out as a servant, to help Dr. Morrison in his work. The committee all agreed about this. Then the gentleman who had made the suggestion was requested to see the young man and talk with him about it. He did so. He told him that the committee were not willing to send him out as a missionary; but they would be very glad to have him go out as a servant to Dr. Morrison, if he was willing to go.

Now many a young man would have been offended at this, and would have risen up in pride and anger, and said: 'No, I can't consent to that. If I can't go out as a missionary, I won't go at all.' But it was different with this young man. When asked if he was willing to go as a servant, without a moment's hesitation, and with a bright smile, he replied: 'Yes, sir, certainly. I am willing to do anything, so that I am only at work for Jesus. To be "a hewer of wood, or drawer of water" is too great an honour for me when the Lord's house is building.' That young man went out to China as a servant. But he was well known afterwards as the Rev. Dr. Milne—one of the best and most successful missionaries that ever was. And it was his humility which made him great.

Another thing that had to do with John's greatness in the sight of the Lord was *his unselfishness*.

And there was one other thing that helped to make John great, and that was his *courage*.

John was a very brave man. At the time when he was preaching, Herod was the King of Judea. He was fond of John, and became his friend. We are told that he took great pleasure in hearing John preach, and did many things that he told the people to do. But Herod was a very bad man. He had taken the wife of his brother Philip to be his wife. This was very wrong. It was breaking God's law. John made up his mind to speak to Herod about it.

Many a man would have been afraid to do this. He would have said to himself: 'I had better let this matter alone; for I shall surely lose the friendship of the king if I say anything to him about it'. But John was not afraid. His rule was always to do

what was right, no matter what the consequences might be.

So he told the king one day that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. This made Herod very angry. He had John cast into prison; and not long after, at the request of his wife, he ordered him to be put to death. But John's work was done. And when he died, he went into the presence of that Lord in whose sight he was great. And one thing that helped to make him so, was his courage.

And we must learn to follow his example in this respect, if we hope to be great in the sight of the Lord, as he was.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models* p. 270.

#### A QUESTION TO ASK AND ANSWER

'What manner of child shall this be?'—LUKE I. 66.

This is what people were asking about a little baby that was born eighteen hundred years ago amidst the hills of Judea. They had come up to what we may perhaps call his 'christening,' for when the baby was eight days old the Jews used to give it a name, as you had your name in baptism. It was a time of much rejoicing. The relations came from miles around, and the rich people made a great feast of it.

This baby's 'christening' was a very joyous one. His father and mother had no children, and were both well stricken in years when there came this little bright-eyed boy to gladden them. So all the relations felt that they must go up to rejoice at his birth. There were men and women who had come away from Galilee, and who spoke with a country brogue, like that which betrayed Peter. There were old grey-headed men with long silvery beards, talking solemnly of the times. There were rich relations for whom all the rest made way; and poor relations who tried to make themselves of some use in the preparations. There were priests who blessed the child in the name of the God of Abraham. And then of course there were children too, who wanted to kiss the little one, and who thought themselves quite big enough to nurse it.

Now the one thing that they all talked about was this—*What will they call him?* 'Of course he'll be called Zacharias, after his father,' said the old people. But his mother shook her head. 'No,' said she, 'his name shall be John.'

Let every John who reads this think of what this name means, and of what he ought to be—the *gift of God*.

The mother's name was Elisabeth, and you would like to know what that means. Only the gentlest and best of maidens should have so sweet a name. It means the *promise of God*.

The friends objected to the name John, because nobody of the family was called by that name. Perhaps the priest suggested that Zacharias was a good name; it meant the *man of the Lord*.

All this time the poor father could take no part in the talking. He had been quite dumb for months

past. They made signs to him, and he showed them that he wanted to write something. They brought the writing materials, and as they watched the old man's hand they saw him write, 'His name is John'. That very moment the father's mouth was opened, and he praised God with a loud voice. Of course they were all very much amazed to hear him speak again, and as they went home, the different little companies that talked about it said to each other, 'What manner of child shall this be?'

That child became the mighty preacher, John the Baptist; and Jesus says that of them that are born of women, there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

Now every boy and girl might well ask about himself or herself, *What manner of child shall this be?* Fairy tales very often tell how people have been changed into wonderful shapes, changed to different creatures altogether. As you grow older, you will find that there is no fairy tale so wonderful as that which is really happening every day. Isn't it quite as strange as any fairy tale to think of this little maiden here, with smooth, ruddy cheeks and sunny hair, turned into an old woman, going mumbling and muttering, with the weight of eighty years bending her down, wrinkled and grey and toothless? Stranger than any fairy tale to think of this boy who finds it hard work to sit still for two minutes together, turned into an old man, stiff-kneed and bent, glad to creep along with a couple of sticks, and when he sits down hardly knowing how to get up again.

One night the house of a country parson took fire. The alarm was raised. The frightened family hurried forth half-dressed, and as they stood in the ruddy light, gathered in one of the outbuildings, the grateful father was kneeling to thank God for their deliverance, when he saw that one of the children was missing—a little lad of seven years. To reach him by the stairs was impossible, they were in a blaze. At that moment they saw him at an upper window. The flames roared and leaped in the wind. The burning masses fell on every side, flinging a shower of sparks high up against the black clouds of smoke. A few minutes more, and the fire would reach the place where the little fellow stood. Then a brave man bade another stand firm against the wall, and leaping on his shoulders, he stretched up a pair of strong arms and lifted the child out of the window, amidst the joy of the crowd. Think of the little lad of seven. His eyes full of wonder, his cheeks scorched with the heat, bewildered at the roaring flames and the half-dressed people and all the excitement, pressed to the mother's heart with tears of joy and thanks to the Almighty Father. But lo! the conjurer Time goes by, and the little lad is a great preacher stirring all the land, and blessed by God to the salvation of thousands of souls.

Now I want you to think what you are going to be. It is not chance that does all this. You are deciding now what you will be. The fruit comes out of the blossom; the flower out of the bud; the man

out of the child. You are beginning now to be the men and women that you will be. You must be your own good fairies, and here are some things that you can do, or that you can get done for you. For we can go for help to One who is able to do very much more than we ask or think.

**I. First, Mend the Little Faults Now.**—One day two men were building a ship. As they sawed away at a piece of timber, they found that part of it was worm-eaten.

'We had better not use that piece,' said one man. 'Why, we have had trouble enough with it,' said his companion. 'Tis a pity to throw it away. Nobody will see it, and it is only a little bit gone.' So they put it in.

After a while the ship was finished. With her sails set and flags flying, and with merry strains of music, she was launched. She went across the seas, and was returning with a costly cargo. They were nearing home, and had almost reached the harbour when a storm came on. For a while she stood it bravely enough. Then suddenly every face grew pale. The ship had sprung a leak. In came the water, in through the yielding plank. The sailors struggled against it in vain. Hope is gone. Up go the rockets of distress, and the brave men of the lifeboat take off the crew just in time to see the vessel with her costly cargo go down beneath the waters. And all through one worm-eaten plank! So look after little failings. It will be too late to mend them by and by. And because there is only One who does know all the little defects, and only One who can make them right, let us go to Him with all our hearts, and pray as David prayed of old, '*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*' Always remember that Jesus came into the world and died to save us from our sins and failings. This is what the angel said, 'His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins'.

**II. Secondly, Be Now what you would Like to be when you are Grown up.**—The worst kind of man and woman that you can ever come to be is a liar. I would a hundred times rather meet you twenty years hence, all rags and tatters, as poor as church mice, and know that you told the truth, than find you what is called respectable people if you could even play at telling lies.

**III.** Then lastly, take with you two things more wonderful than any other gifts that you ever read or heard of. The first is a *golden key*. Whenever you use it help shall come. It will unlock dungeon doors, and loosen iron bars, and let the heavy chains fall off so noiselessly as not to awaken the soldiers to whom the prisoner is fastened. Read the story in the twelfth chapter of the Acts, and note well the golden key that is mentioned in the fifth verse, '*Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him*'. Wear this golden key at your girdle. It brings the Almighty to your help, and makes the most High God your friend. Then besides the key there is a charm that I would have you wear, not next to



your heart, but in the heart itself. The charm is this, *Try always to please Jesus*. Think of it, pray about it, and try to do it until you get it into your hearts. Try and be thinking of it constantly, What would Jesus have me to do? You never heard of any such wonderful charm as that. It will always tell us *what* to do. It will weave for us a robe of sunshine that the Book calls the *garment of praise*. And it will make us so strong that we shall be able to carry any cross that the Lord may ask us to bear for Him.

And yet the most wonderful part remains, that if we come to Jesus and seek Him as our Saviour and our Helper, *the child will become an angel of God*.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 99.

### THE CHILD JESUS

LUKE I. 80.

ALTHOUGH I have often spoken to you about Jesus, I have never spoken about Him as a Child.

But this is one of the things best worth speaking about in Jesus.

He was the pattern Child. Do you want to know what kind of child God wishes you to be? I answer: He wishes you to become a child like Jesus—like the *Child Jesus*.

When Jesus became a Man, there were some things about Him and in Him which many people did not like.

Bad people did not like His goodness; evil-doers did not like the terrible sermon in which He spoke against their evil deeds.

Some people did not like His poverty. Others did not like the way in which poor people and sick people came flocking about Him for comfort and healing.

But when He was a Child, everybody liked Him. All the time of His childhood He grew in favour with God and man.

I gather from that that His childhood was a beautiful time of His life, and that He was a good, true, simple, loving Child.

It is said: 'He grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him'.

He grew as you are growing, and it is a very beautiful sight to see the baby growing into the child, and the child growing into the girl or boy.

But sometimes alongside of that growth other things grow which are not beautiful; sometimes a naughty spirit or rude speech or self-will or self-seeking grows, and people who want to admire the lovely hair and cheeks and eyes and limbs cannot do that, because they see self looking out of the eyes, and pride tossing the head, and rudeness making gestures with hands or feet. In such a case there may be the growth of a beautiful outside, but also the growth of an unbeautiful spirit.

Now in the Child Jesus both the inside and the outside growths were beautiful. He grew, and, we are told, He waxed strong in spirit.

Another beautiful thing in the Child Jesus: He was filled with wisdom. That means, for one thing,

He began to ask: Why has God sent Me into the world?

It means that He began to read and understand the Scriptures.

It means that He began to look around and to think what the stars were saying, and the lilies, and the birds, and the wheat, and the corn, and the tares.

And there was another beautiful thing in His childhood: His obedience to His parents.

There was in Him no conceit, only humility. He was wise, and did not know it. He was wise, and was not proud about it.

Everybody liked to be near Him, I am sure, and the old people would say: There is winsome grace in this Child.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 1.

### THE GREAT BIRTHDAY

(Christmas)

'Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.'—LUKE II. 11.

THE birthday of Jesus Christ! What a great birthday that must be! No wonder Christians count it one of their brightest, happiest days. No wonder we make all our churches gay with shining holly, and sing our best-loved hymns, and fill our services with joyful praise. We like on our own birthdays to wish each other joy, and to give our little birthday gifts, and to keep the day in some happy fashion. But the birthday of Jesus Christ is not like any other birthday. It is the best, the brightest, the happiest birthday the world has ever known. It is a birthday for everybody; a birthday for the whole world to keep; a day of joy and gladness for all mankind; 'for unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given'; and so we are all glad of heart on Christmas Day; and we all wish each other 'a merry Christmas'; and I hope we do something better still, and bring to our dear Saviour our birthday presents of loving hearts and holy praise.

I. Now come with me and we will go, all in a moment, a journey together to the Holy Land. We are on a long ridge of grey rock, about six miles south of Jerusalem, and it is a winter evening. The ridge of rock runs east and west, and towards the eastern end of it there is a little town, quite a small one, built on the rocks. The houses are low and flat-roofed, and there is a synagogue among them, and an inn. Now when you hear of an inn you must not for one moment think of such an inn as you might see in any town or village in this country. There was nothing of the sort in Bethlehem, or in any place in the Holy Land. You would think such an inn as you would find there a poor place to put up in on a cold winter night. The inns are much the same there to this day. You would find a large low building surrounding an open courtyard, into which would be driven all the animals—horses, asses, camels, cattle,—for which shelter was wanted. In the building all round you would find no regular rooms, only a sort of portico, divided up into separate portions, but all

open towards the courtyard inside. You would have to provide everything you wanted for yourself, even to a bit of carpet to sit or lie upon, for there would be no servants to wait upon you, and no furniture for your comfort. It would be just as rude and rough a night's shelter as you can well imagine. But on the evening we are thinking about this rough shelter is crowded. There are many strangers come to the place. There is going to be a census taken. You know what a census is. It is the taking an account on some one particular day of all the inhabitants of a land. The Jews were very particular about their family descent, and to please them the Roman Emperor, when he ordered this census to be taken, allowed the Jews to be enrolled or registered each in the place to which his family belonged. This was not the common Roman way, but the Jews made a point of it. Now Bethlehem was David's city. You will remember it used in very old times to be called Ephrath, and there Jesse 'the Ephrathite' lived, and there David was born, and there he kept the flocks of his father, and there in defending the sheep he killed the lion and the bear. David had a great many descendants, and that was why the place was so full. All those who could trace up their family to David came there for the census.

II. And now see—there come to the little town a man and a woman. They are travelling on foot, for they are poor; slowly, for she is weak. He is a good deal older than she is, and takes great care of her. And first they turn their weary steps to the inn. Alas! it is quite full. What shall they do? They must find shelter somewhere. They are told by some one, perhaps the master of the inn, that there is a stable belonging to the inn, where they can take shelter at least for the night. They go in search of it, and they find a rough cave in the rock, in which some animals are stalled. We cannot be quite sure that it was a cave, but a Christian writer about one hundred and fifty years afterwards says it was, and the people of the place may have kept the spot in memory. At anyrate, there are such caves now in the rocks there, and over one of these, which is said to be the true one, a church has been built. Well; it was the best place they could get, though poor and mean and wretched enough to look at. Ah! but how glorious did that stable become! Suppose you could have stopped some of the people of Bethlehem that evening, and pointed to the poor stable under the rock, and said, 'Something will happen in that stable to-night which will make it a far grander place than the Temple at Jerusalem; yes, make it a place to be talked of, and known about, and honoured, all over the world,' they would have thought you were mad. Yet so it was. For in that poor stable on Christmas morning eighteen hundred and . . . years ago—

*Christ was Born.*

It was the greatest thing that had ever happened since the world was made. 'And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the

things that they had heard and seen.' And we too will return to our homes 'glorifying and praising God for all the things that we have heard and seen'. It is right we should. Nay, how can we help it, if we think of what Christmas really is? I know it is a happy day to many of you, because you see dear friends and relatives, and have many pleasant things to make you happy. Well, God will not blame that. But oh! in all your Christmas happiness, do let this be the best and truest part—that you are keeping the great birthday of the Lord.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 7.

### JESUS CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY

'For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'—LUKE II. 11.

ALL have birthdays. Come downstairs, first thing in the morning, what do friends say? and besides often give us something. Sometimes, too, like to keep our birthday rather differently from other days; cake made, invite friends, have birthday party or feast. Christmas day is our Lord's birthday; may keep that in same way.

1. **The Birthday Greeting.**—All know what we say on birthdays—'Many happy returns of the day'—really a prayer, means 'may you have,' i.e. 'may God give you,' many happy returns. Don't forget this whenever you say the words to your friends.

Remember also that Jesus Christ is your friend. He has not forgotten you because He has gone up to heaven. If we really wish Him happiness that will make Him more happy. If (Luke xv. 10) the angels can be made more joyful, surely what we think and say may make Jesus Christ more joyful.

All, however, no good unless we *mean* what we *say*—therefore must show that we really mean it by offering—

#### II. The Birthday Gift.

1. What can we give? Nothing ours—even we ourselves 'not our own' (1 Cor. vi. 19). All Jesus Christ's already, yet given in our keeping that if we will we may give Him all! [May illustrate from the story in *Misunderstood*: Little boy wants to give father a birthday present—goes into shop—chooses present—no money—father has to pay—still father, all the same, values present as his boy's gift.]

2. What would He like to have? This the main question.

(i) *Our hearts.* Proverbs xxxii. 26. Asks for this gift. Perhaps have given it already. If so, may give it again. [Man may give field—afterwards, when crops come up, give them as part of field—same gift, yet different.]

(ii) *Our bodies*—His—for His use—if we give them. Eyes, ears, feet, hands, all His—e.g., blind person—can't read—Jesus Christ wants him read to—you give your eyes, no good *giving* them, unless ready to do what Jesus Christ wants doing with them.

(iii) *Our possessions.* Cf. Mark ix. 41. 'In My

name'—what it means. If we give anything for Christ's sake, because we think Christ wants us to give it, then we give it to Him. [Illustr.—Missionary money, etc.]

All this what we can do to give Christ pleasure on His birthday. But He, too, likes to give us pleasure, so invites us to—

### III. The Birthday Feast.

Knows we cannot be happy without Him—wants us to be happy—so willing to feed us (John vi. 35). The food He gives makes us strong—gives us the best kind of happiness. He offers it to you to-day, will not you come to the feast?

*Conclusion.*—Our brother at home—we still at school. Yet, even so, can increase His happiness, and allow Him to increase ours—one of these days all at home together. How happy when *all* keep His birthday at home in His Father's house!—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 20.

### A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.'—LUKE II. 15.

I. *Let us*; then that tells us that there are others who will not. And we all know how sadly true that is. A merry Christmas is not of necessity a happy Christmas. It is not a happy Christmas, that of those who have a holiday indeed from their everyday work, but only that they may spend it in riotous living as the Prodigal Son, in drunkenness and revellings, and worse. But, as I say, the text tells you what is. 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.'

II. What is going to Bethlehem? Ah me, what a joy it would be—would it not!—if we could to-morrow be carried away to that real Bethlehem, see the Church that stands over what was once the manger, see where the angel appeared, see where the shepherds worshipped! But remember what He, who cannot lie, Himself said, 'Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed'.

III. We *can* go in thought. We can see the poor little Baby, the very and eternal God, laid in a manger, while yet sitting on the Throne of the Father. We can see what kind of courtiers He had, the ox and the ass; as it is written, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib'. We can imagine, now, or when we wake in the night, what those night watches were, the sheep penned in their fold because of the wolves and bears, the shepherds lying in the open air guarding their charge; and then the great light from heaven, and then the one Angel who said, 'Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people'; and then the multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'.

'Let us *now* go (good advice of the shepherds to you not to put it off) *even* unto Bethlehem'; the 'even' showing that it is not an easy thing. It was not an easy thing for them to leave their sheep and their folds; it is not an easy thing for you to be

self-denying, to follow God's will rather than your own. Easy! It is the hardest thing, the one thing of your lives; it is the thing in which that better life begins.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 46.

### TWELVE YEARS OLD

(First Sunday after Epiphany)

'When He was twelve years old.'—LUKE II. 42.

I ALWAYS think of this as the *Children's Sunday*, because in the Gospel for this Sunday we read about Jesus 'when He was twelve years old'.

I. You know that this is the only glimpse we get of our dear Saviour's life from the time when He was a little Infant until He was thirty years old, except that we are told that 'the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom'; and again, that He 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'. These two verses of St. Luke tell us the way in which He grew up from childhood to boyhood and manhood in his quiet home at Nazareth, but of what He did, or said, or felt, or thought, we know nothing at all, except just this one thing that happened 'when He was twelve years old'. First we have twelve years with nothing told us. Then this one little story. Then eighteen more years with nothing told us. God had good reasons for not letting us know more about Jesus as a Child and as a Boy. But if God thought it good for us not to know what Jesus did and said for thirty years of His earthly life, except only for this one little story, don't you think we ought to prize this one little story very much? Surely God must have meant it to be very precious to us, if it was picked out from all that happened for thirty long years as the one thing most useful to be told us.

II. Where was Jesus sitting when His mother and Joseph found Him? [In the Temple in the midst of the doctors.] What do you mean by 'doctors'? [Men learned in the Bible.] What was Jesus doing? [Hearing them, and asking them questions.] Now I must tell you of a mistake children sometimes make about this. They fancy Jesus Christ, 'when He was twelve years old,' set Himself up as a teacher, and was teaching those learned men in the Temple. This is not at all what is meant by 'hearing them, and asking them questions'. No; Jesus was making Himself a pupil, not a teacher. He was sitting to be taught and questioned like other Jewish boys, and as the custom was He also asked questions, not to show off His wisdom, but as a scholar who wished to know more. We are not told what it was that He was being questioned about when He was found. Suppose it had been about the Passover. And suppose those learned men had asked him about the lamb that was sacrificed at the Passover. Would it not have been strange? I do not think He would have told them who He was, or have said, 'I am the true Lamb that will be sacrificed for the whole world'; but He would have known this, and many



other things too wonderful to tell them. Whatever it was that they asked Him, we know He answered very wisely, for 'they were astonished at His understanding and answers'.

III. Do you remember what excuse Jesus made when His mother spoke to Him and said, 'Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' [He said He must be about His Father's business.] And who did He mean by His Father? [God.] Yes; His mother had spoken of Joseph as His father, because he had always been like a father to Him, but now Jesus reminds her that His true father is above, and that to Him He owes His first duty. 'How is it that ye sought Me?' He says; 'wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' They should have known where to look for Him. They should have been sure that it could only be the claims of some higher duty which could make Him give them one moment's anxiety. I think they must have expected something of this sort to happen some time or other. They could never have forgotten the wonderful things that had happened twelve years before. They must often have thought of the angel's wonderful words. Was not this holy Child the Son of God? When would God make Him known to men? Ah! they must wait yet. But they have something new to treasure in their hearts, and to ponder over in their quiet home.

Love God's house. Remember how Jesus loved it. And when you are there, always be about your Father's business.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 18.

### JESUS CHRIST GOING INTO THE TEMPLE WHEN HE WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD

LUKE II. 46.

Our subject is 'Jesus Christ going into the Temple when He was twelve years old'. Let us read the passage together aloud. Luke II. 42 to 52: 'And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but

His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'

I. 'How old was Jesus Christ when He went into the Temple?' 'Twelve years old.' Now I want to tell you a little about Jesus being 'twelve years old'.

When a little Jew (and you know Jesus was a Jew), when a little Jew became 'twelve years old,' he was called 'the son of the commandment,' or 'the son of the law'. When he was 'twelve years old,' he was allowed to begin to fast. He might not fast before. When he was 'twelve years old,' it was considered that he could keep the law of God; he could do it understandingly. It was something like when we are confirmed.

And now Jesus was 'twelve years old,' and He became 'a son of the law,' 'a son of the commandment'. He might fast. He might keep the law. He was—as it were—confirmed, when He went up to Jerusalem.

Did Jesus Christ begin His ministry when He was twelve years old? 'No.' It was not right that a boy of twelve years old should begin His ministry. Boys of twelve years old are not ministers. How old was Jesus when He did begin His ministry? 'Thirty.' How old was He when He died? 'Thirty-three.' Mind one thing: Jesus Christ was thirty years preparing for three years' work. Ten-elevenths of His life He spent in preparing. How long do you spend in preparing?

Was Jesus Christ ever a little baby in a cradle? 'Yes.' Was He ever a little boy just beginning to walk and to speak? 'Yes.' Was He ever a big boy and a young man? 'Yes.' It is very pleasant to think of, that at whatever age you are—I do not know how old you are—but whatever age you are—you can think, 'Jesus Christ was exactly my age'. When I see a little tiny baby just born, then I think, 'Jesus was once a little baby'. It seems such an honour to be a little baby. I know that Jesus Christ can feel with little babies—because He was once a little baby. When I see a little child just beginning to toddle along, and saying some little word such as 'mamma,' I think Jesus Christ was just the same. He said His little words. He can feel with little children just beginning to speak. And He can feel with you when you are 'twelve years old'. He knows your difficulties and joys.

Which have greater difficulties—girls and boys, or grown-up people? Much the same, I think. But Jesus can feel with the troubles and joys of every one of every age.

Where was Jesus brought up till He was 'twelve years old'? 'At Nazareth.' Can anybody tell me what Nazareth means? 'The town of the Branch.' That is a beautiful name for it, because Jesus is 'the Branch'. Turn to the eleventh of Isaiah, and the first verse: 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots'. And Zechariah calls Him 'the Branch'. So

Nazareth—where Jesus was brought up—was ‘the town of the Branch’.

Do you know what Jerusalem means? Some think it means ‘vision of peace’; and others, ‘the possession of peace’. Jesus was brought up in ‘the town of the Branch’; and at ‘twelve years old’ He went up to ‘the possession of peace,’ or ‘vision of peace,’ Jerusalem.

Now I want to ask you a question which I hope you will answer carefully.

Who were Jesus Christ’s father and mother? Now speak carefully, if you please. ‘God and Mary.’ Do not say anything else. He had a Divine Father, and a human mother. He had God for His Father, and Mary for His mother. So you see at once His name ‘Emmanuel,’ God and man; He brought together in one person the Divine and the human; ‘Emmanuel,’ God with us; God in our nature; because He came into our world to bring God and man together. Sin—our wickedness—had separated us from God; Christ came to bring us together. Therefore His very birth showed it. He brought God and man together, because God was His Father and a woman His mother.

But those who were called His parents were ‘Mary and Joseph,’ because Joseph became the husband of Mary afterwards.

His so-called parents then went up to Jerusalem. To what feast was it? ‘The feast of the Passover.’ Can you tell me what time of the year it was? In the spring—the month Abib; partly March, partly April.

How many great feasts were there? ‘Three.’ This was one—the great feast. It was a time when there was a great deal of grass. Perhaps you do not know why I say that. It is very important. Perhaps we shall consider why another day. There was plenty of grass for the people to sit down upon when eating their dinner. When ‘the multitude’ was fed with ‘the five loaves’ there was plenty of grass for them to sit upon. A little after there would have been no grass; but then it was the spring.

They went ‘to keep the feast’. Do you know how long the feast lasted? Seven days. The Feast of Pentecost was only for one day; the Feast of Tabernacles continued eight days. Was Mary bound to go up to Jerusalem? Was Mary ordered to go up? Joseph was, but Mary was not. Only the males went up necessarily; but she, being a very pious woman, and loving her Son very much, she went up with Him and her husband, to keep the Feast of the Passover.

And when ‘the seven days’ were over, then they set off to go home. There was such a crowd! Do you know at that time there generally were in Jerusalem a million of people? Where did they all find beds, do you think? They used to put booths all along the streets, and beds and tents on the tops of the flats, the tops of the houses. So that all the people who came thither used to sleep in booths, or in beds, or on the flat tops of the houses, for otherwise there would not have been room for them.

I mention this because it explains how it was that they did not sooner find out that the child Jesus had been left behind. There was such a crowd, they could not tell where He was. All those seven days He had been with His relations and friends, and His parents thought that He was with them still.

For how many days did they miss Him? ‘Three.’ How many days was Jesus Christ in the grave? ‘Three.’ Then Jesus Christ was lost—could not be seen for three days at the beginning, and then He could not be seen for three days at the end. Some think the one was a type, a likeness of the other. He could not at first be seen for three days, just as after He could not be seen for three days, because He was in the grave.

Because they could not find Him they came back. How far did they come back, do you think? ‘A day’s journey.’ About twenty miles? I do not suppose Mary went so far as twenty miles, as there were a great many weak people amongst them. But missing Him, they went back to the Temple and there sought for Him.

The Temple was built by Solomon, and then destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; it was built again by?—anybody may answer who can—‘Zerubbabel’. And then it was all built again by Herod the Great. So that you may say it had been built three times.

And the Temple had three courts. Where do you think Jesus was? Would He be allowed to go into the court of the priests, the inside court? I do not think He went into the sacred enclosure then, but into the outside court. There were rooms in the building. I suppose Jesus was in one of these rooms in the outer court.

But who was He with? ‘The doctors.’ What does the word ‘doctors’ mean? Wise men. We call physicians ‘doctors,’ because they are wise men; but the word ‘doctors’ does not mean physicians, but wise men.

II. What was He doing? I want you to be careful about this. What was He doing with the wise men? ‘Asking questions.’ Was He disputing with them? No. Although we may have thought so, He was not disputing. What was He doing? ‘Asking them questions and hearing what they said.’ Did they ask Him questions? ‘Yes.’ How do you know that? It says He asked them questions. It does not say they asked Him questions. But it does say, ‘They were astonished at His answers.’ Therefore they must have asked Him questions. They asked Him some questions, and He asked them some questions, something like it is with us now.

III. I want to know what Jesus said to Joseph and Mary in the Temple. ‘His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?’ Will you tell me what the word ‘wist’ means? Do you remember any other place in the Bible where it is used? It says of the manna,

'They wist not what it was!' And of the transfiguration we read, 'Peter wist not what to say'. And St. Peter with the angel, 'He wist not that it was true which was done by the angel'. And St. Paul, 'I wist not that he was the high priest'. The word occurs very often. It is an old word 'to know'. The old Saxon word is *wissen*; from the word 'knowledge'. 'Wist' is the present tense of the word 'wissen'. 'Wist ye not?' 'Did not you know?'

Now I want you to tell me what we are to learn from the word 'must'. 'Wist ye not—did not ye know—that I *must*?' Is 'must' a good word to say? It says, 'Must is for a king, but not for his people'. Is it good for us? May you say, 'I must be good; I must love God very much; I must conquer my sins?' Is that good? Very good. And it means this, 'I have got such a feeling in my heart, I cannot help preaching to you; I cannot help trying what I can do for God. I must. I must. I must. "Wist ye not that I must"—I cannot help it—"that I must be about my Father's business?"'

Does Jesus Christ tell us to say, '*My Father*'? Now answer very thoughtfully, because I am not going to treat you as little babies. Does Jesus Christ tell us to say, '*My Father*'? *Never*. What does He tell us to say? '*Our Father*', not '*my*'. The reason is this: that God is Jesus' Father in a different way from that in which He is our Father. If we are Christ's people, then God is our Father; but Jesus can say '*My Father*' in a different way to what we can say it. Therefore we are taught to say, '*Our Father*'. He says, 'Wist ye not that I must be about *My Father's business*?'

IV. What is 'your Father's work?' 'Wist ye not that I must be about *My Father's business*?' What is '*My Father's business*'? Can you think? I think of five things. Will you think of some? I mean what a boy or girl can say—(I am not speaking of old men and women)—what could they say they had to do for God? I would say, Think what Jesus did—what Jesus did at this time—and how you can be like Him.

The first is, learn wisely. He was learning. Now you may do a great many things for God while you are children; but the great thing is getting ready to be very useful men and women by and by. Everything you learn, think, 'This will make me a useful man, or a useful woman'. It will give me great influence. It will help me to speak to people better. I wish when you are learning a lesson—doing any study—you would think, 'This is our Father's business, because by and by I am going to use this bit of knowledge for God. It will make me useful.' That is the first thing.

What is the next thing? Where was Jesus? In the Temple. Are you and I 'about our Father's business' in this church? I think so. We come to church to pray; to please God; to honour God. Is not that 'our Father's business'? Then love to go to church.

Now think of a third thing. What sort of people was Jesus with, wise people or foolish? 'Wise.' Then that is being about 'our Father's business' to be with wise people—people that do us good.

And all that He had He used well for God. His understanding, all He got by heart, He used for God, not for Himself. That is 'being about our Father's business'.

And one more thing—He was obedient. He was obedient to God; and it says, He was obedient to His parents.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

THE PATTERN OF CHILDHOOD

'And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.'—LUKE II. 51.

THERE are two lessons you can learn from this part of the life of our Lord—Patience, Obedience.

I. *Patience*.—There is a great deal of impatience in the present day. Children want to be men and women—to be judges of what they may do, and where they may go, and what books they may read—all in a very few years. Remember the patience of the youthful Saviour. His life of work lasted only three and a half years; his life of preparation for it lasted thirty years. Is it not just the opposite with us? We think that a short preparation of a few years is quite enough for a life which may last for even fifty years afterwards. When any of us look back on three years of our life, it seems so short if we measure it by what we have been able to do. What a wonderful three years of work those years of His life were! Is not some of the secret of the wondrous working power of them to be found in the length of the preparation for it?

II. *Obedience*.—Jesus was subject unto His parents. To think of that fact, to remember who and what *He* was, ought to teach you better than any words of mine.

We see a great many kinds of obedience to parents which are not real obedience. There are three little words I would ask you to remember; they will be finger-posts pointing you to true obedience. Always do *what* you are told to do; *when* you are told to do it; and *because* you are told to do it. *What, When, Because*.

*What* you are told. You know very often you are told to do something you do not quite like, and you do not exactly wish to disobey, and so you go and half do the thing, or do something else which you think will seem just the same. That is not true obedience. Do exactly *what* you are told.

*When* you are told. Do it at once. Do not wait and think whether you will obey or not. It becomes more difficult every minute; because your proud little heart rises up against the command, and the devil takes advantage of it, and suggests to you reason after reason why you need not do it just yet. Do at once what your parents, or whoever is in authority over you, tell you.

*Because* you are told. Do not invent some other reason for doing it. Do not say, 'Well, I'll do it



because I like it'; but do it because you have been told to do it. Do not ask, 'Why am I to do it?' You are to do it because you are told to do so. That is quite reason enough.

Remember these two great lessons to be learnt—Patience and Obedience. Do not be self-willed; do not be in a hurry. These may seem small matters, quiet things which do not attract any attention. But remember whose Example we have. Remember that Christ tells us that not only through those three years of toil and work, on which the whole world gazes with admiration and wonder, but through these quiet years of preparation and obedience which are hidden from our sight, He was 'about His Father's business'.

It is no matter whether people see or admire your work or not. There is no work so small, no place so remote when you are praying or working, but God can see it.

When one of the greatest temples in Greece was being built, the most eminent sculptor was seen one day to be working with the greatest care at a figure which was so high up and so hidden away that no one could see it. He worked laboriously with his chisel at the head, carving elaborately the hair, so that it should be as perfect as any figure in the temple; and when some one asked him why he was so careful, and spent so much time on it when no one would see it, he answered nobly, 'The gods will see it'.

So it will be with you. You are the temples of the Holy Ghost. The smallest delicate traceries of daily duty are perhaps unseen by men, but God sees them. Remember that when tempted to do wrong, when struggling to do right, when hesitating to obey, when your heart urges you to think that it does not see too matter—no one will know, no one will see it—*God will see it.*—T. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 147.

### SELFISHNESS

'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.'—LUKE VI. 31.

WHAT do we mean by selfishness?

Amongst the old Greek fairy tales there is one about a wonderful being called Proteus, who could tell fortunes and do many strange things. But it was very hard to get this Proteus to do what you wanted, for when people tried to catch him he used to change himself into all sorts of shapes—into a beast, a tree, or even fire and water.

Now, selfishness is just like this strange being the Greeks called Proteus. It takes a great many shapes and has a great many names; one of these is rudeness, and others are cruelty, injustice, greediness, and it has many more besides. But I think we may say, in whatever shape we meet selfishness, its real name is 'Too great a love of self,' and a selfish person is one who thinks of himself, and loves himself, and what belongs to him, a great deal more than he ought.

A long time ago there was an architect called Sostratus, who built a watch-tower or lighthouse for

the King of Egypt. This, of course, was to warn the sailors to keep away from some very dangerous rocks, and it was kind and thoughtful of the king to have it made. But when the lighthouse was nearly finished, Sostratus had his own name cut in a stone on the wall, and then covered over with plaster, and, as soon as the plaster was dry, wrote on it in gold letters the name of the good king who was so thoughtful about others. Now, why did he write his own name under the plaster? Because he knew in time the waves would wash away the coat of plastering on which was written the good king's name, and then his own would be seen, and so people would praise him for having built this useful tower. You see he was a selfish man, and thought only of his own glory.

I am sure you have all read or heard something of the Prophet Jonah? You remember how God told him to go to Nineveh and preach to the people, telling them He was going to destroy the city in forty days on account of their wickedness. And what did Jonah do? Did he set off at once, glad to do whatever God commanded him? No, look at him; he is going on board a ship which is bound for a place called Tarshish—quite a different way altogether—what is this for? I will tell you. It is because Jonah was a selfish man. He thought if he went and told the people how angry God was with them, they would repent of their wickedness, and then He would forgive them and spare their city and their lives.

Don't you think he ought to have been very glad if his preaching would lead the people to forsake their sins? Yes, but he was only thinking of himself and what people would say of him. He was afraid that men would turn round and say he was a false prophet, and laugh at him, because the things he prophesied didn't come to pass. So, instead of going to Nineveh he fled away to Tarshish. At last, however, he did go—he preached, the people repented, and God spared them, just as he expected. And now look at him! He is sitting just outside the city walls. We should fancy he ought to be very pleased as he looks towards Nineveh, and thinks how the people have turned away from their sins and have been spared. But no; there is a frown on his face, and he seems very sullen and angry. Why? Because a tree or shrub under which he has been sitting has withered away, and he can't get any shelter from the sun, and is feeling very hot and faint with the heat. What does he care about Nineveh and all those thousands of people? Their lives are saved, but he has lost the shade of the tree. And so he is full of anger. What a selfish man, you say. Yes, but let us take care we are not like him, and get into the habit of thinking too much of ourselves.

Let us learn to be unselfish, as Christians should be, and think of others as well as ourselves; indeed we are commanded to prefer one another—that is to put others even before ourselves. You know what Christ did? He thought of Himself last. Why did He leave heaven and come down to live upon earth? Because He cared for us.

We read in the Bible that sometimes He was so busy He had no time even to eat, but we never read that He had no time to heal the sick, or to help all who came to Him.

We read that twice He shed tears, but it was not on account of His own sufferings; once it was when His friends had lost a brother; the other time when He thought of the people of Jerusalem who had rejected Him, and of the sad things that would happen to them.

And on the cross He thought of Himself last. Although He was dying a very cruel and terrible death He thought of others first even then. Do you hear what He is saying?

He is speaking to the penitent thief these words of hope and comfort, 'To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise'.

Again He is speaking—this time He is taking care of His mother and providing for her welfare.

And He even cares for those who are putting Him to death, and says, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 51.

### THE BOY WHO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO PLAY

'They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.'—LUKE VII. 32.

God made boys and girls to play. He made them, of course, that they might do other things too, but He made them to play. Happily for those of us who live in these days we see these things more clearly than some of our forefathers did. The good men of the past did not all look with favour upon play. Even the great and kind John Wesley forbade play at all times. In 1748 when he opened Kingswood School for boarders between the ages of six and twelve, he announced that there would be no holidays, and that no time would be allowed on any day for play. He gave this as his reason that 'he who plays when he is a child will play when he becomes a man'. I don't think we should have liked to go to his school.

Boys and girls have played through all the centuries. In the tombs which have been explored in Egypt there have been found in those of the children the playthings which were theirs. Dolls and models and other toys of which they were doubtless very fond were buried with them. Jeremiah prophesies that in the Jerusalem that is to be, the children shall be seen playing in the streets of the city. Our Saviour watched the children at their games in the market-place, as we can tell from our text, and He saw how their games revealed their character. Some of our most noted men showed by the play of their early years the manner of men they would be.

I. But there are one or two important things to be said about play. In the first place play reveals our character. What we are comes out in our games. It was this fact made our Lord refer to the children playing in the market-place. Possibly He had stood

and watched the children as they played. Some of them it would seem had suggested a gladsome game, such as that of the marriage festivities; but their companions were morose and would not play. Then a suggestion of quite an opposite kind was made—if not at weddings would they play at funerals? But still their friends were unyielding. So, said Christ, is it with the Pharisees; they would neither accept John the Baptist and his fasting, nor Christ and His rejoicing. The play in the market-place revealed the character of the children. But so it always does! You can soon tell who is the difficult one to please, and who the selfish one when you join others in their games.

II. Then too our games if rightly entered into are a very fine discipline. We learn to check ourselves. We have to subordinate ourselves to others and to the rules of the game. You have doubtless often heard the expression, 'Let's play the game!' The meaning is, let us do the thing properly; let us keep the rules; don't let us take any undue advantages. To play the game is good discipline. We bring ourselves under control; we work in with others according as the game requires, and that is good for us, for it is their game as well as ours.

Our games also encourage the spirit of perseverance in us. There are few games in which we can excel all at once. If at first we don't succeed, as the poem says, we try again. We learn that it is only by putting our best into what we are doing that we can succeed in our games as in other things, and the lesson we thus learn is remembered all through our life. If some boys had not been so persevering on the football and cricket field they would never have been so persevering when they got out into their business and professional life.

We also learn a certain considerateness for others in our play. A game is not only to minister to our pleasure but to their pleasure too. If the right spirit is in us we never enjoy a game more than when we see that it is also giving enjoyment to others. A good game teaches us that we have to be partners with one another in producing the happiness of all. One boy alone does not make up a cricket or a football team; he must co-operate with many others and they with him.

May our play be such that it shall reveal only those lovable and generous qualities which shall make our character the more attractive.—JOHN EAMES, *The Shattered Temple*, p. 60.

### THE TWO DEBTORS

LUKE VII. 36-50.

In this parable Christ praises the woman, condemns Simon, and defends Himself. It is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, and indeed in the whole world. The mere reading of it gives us a feeling of complete beauty. Gregory the Great said, 'As often as I think upon this event, I am more disposed to weep over it than to preach upon it'.

God is the creditor, the debt is sin, and the two

debtors are two classes of sinners. The religion of Jesus is like the seed which has two folded-up leaves, the one opening out into roots, the other into fruits. Or it is like the two-celled heart of man, beating with one full stroke of life. Two loves make up the whole of our religion. These are: I. God's Forgiving Love. II. Our Grateful Love.

**I. God's Forgiving Love.**—Sin is a debt which no sinner can pay. God has His dues, and when we hold these back, we sin and are in debt, and an entry is made against us in His recording book. As all debtors are not equally deep in debt, so all sinners are not equally sinful. Among sinners 'there is no difference' in this, that 'all have sinned and come short,' that no sinner can pay his debt to God, and that our only hope lies in God's forgiving love. Yet some are more guilty in the sight of God than others. In this parable one man's debt is ten times as great as another's, yet both were forgiven with the same frankness or freeness. Both were equally helpless in the hand of justice, and He forgave them from mere grace, or out of free favour, for that is the meaning of the word. The reason why He forgave was not in them, but in Himself: it was not because of something they had done or promised or felt. You are in debt to God, for you have kept from Him the love and service that are His due. Penitence cannot pay your debt; doing your very best cannot undo the past. Mary's tears washed Christ's feet clean, but could not wash away the sins—stains on her soul. You are to do with every self-righteous idea what the Jews did with leaven in their houses at the Passover—search it out and destroy every particle of it.

There are many ways of forgiving a debt. 'Many gifts of men are like blows.' Often a poor debtor has been stung and crushed by the way in which his creditor let him off. But the creditor in the parable forgave the debt *frankly*, that is, with perfect kindness. The debtor was not wounded, nor was his self-respect spoiled. The favour was doubled by the way in which it was granted. God forgives us gladly, without upbraiding. It is His joy to forgive. His very nature is forgiving love. This is the spirit or genius of the Gospel. Do you really understand it? Do you think of Christ as the woman did, or as Simon did? Which do you side with? Has Christ's forgiving love dropt down upon you?

The love of kindness kindles the love of gratitude in the most savage breast. Dr. Dwight of America tells that an Indian hunter once asked food at an inn in Litchfield. As he had no money, the innkeeper would give him nothing. An English settler, who was looking on, took pity on the Indian, and gave him a good supper. By and by the Indians rose against the English, carried them away captive into Canada and began to torture them. One night an Indian came to the English settler who had given the hunter his supper, and said, 'Follow me'. After several days' march through the forest, they came to the inn at Litchfield. The Indian, looking the

Englishman in the face, said, 'I am the hunter to whom you gave the supper in this inn, and I hope I have now paid you for your kindness'. John Howard was cheered with the warmest gratitude from the wild men he found in the prisons all over Europe. We are no men but monsters if God's forgiving love is not followed by—

**II. Our Grateful Love.**—The debtor owing five hundred pence had no love for his creditor till the debt was forgiven. 'The very heart has been taken out of me,' I have heard a debtor say. Trying to do impossible things, goaded and irritated, his spirit was soured, and his better nature had no room for play. And such is the soul under the burden of owned and unforgiven guilt. But forgiveness roots out fear and plants gratitude. In taking away your debt of sin, it lays upon you a debt of honour and love. 'Gratitude is the memory of the heart,' that is, a never-dying sense of benefits received. Christian love is gratitude spreading itself over the whole life. The growing spirit of the forgiven is moulded into obedience in the flame of gratitude. Seest thou not in this woman the exquisite beauty of fresh grateful love? In presence of wondering crowd and scowling Pharisees she owns Christ as her Saviour. Taking the most precious thing she has, the ointment she used for herself in her days of vanity, she spends it all upon her Master. Precious ointment in the East has a value we can hardly understand, and its delicious perfume is a fitting emblem of generous gratitude. To her premeditated anointing add her 'unpremeditated tears,' her wiping of Christ's feet, and her kissing of them. How interesting and full the proof of her love! In verses 44-46 Christ notices minutely every act of it, and with evident pleasure rehearses it to Simon. Each token of grateful love is dear to Him, and He will not let it die. He must praise and reward her. He completes her joy, and speaks His benediction over her.

1. This woman teaches us that *true love gives great gifts*.—She gave the best she had, sorry that her best was so poor, and fain to make it more. Like her, you should count the very feet of Christ, the humblest parts of His service, worthy of your very best. Simon had not true love, and so his gifts were stunted and mean. Christ's gifts to us are very great, and in our best moods we wish our gifts to Him to be great also. Gratitude for His priceless gifts should have a generous outflow. For we may be quite sure that nothing is wasted which springs from love to Christ. Yet He prizes our love more than all the gifts of love. The precious box of ointment by itself is worth nothing to Him. It is told in Dr. Raleigh's Life that his girl, who was little more than a baby, was made happy by a monthly allowance of one halfpenny. In the joy of her great prosperity, she went immediately to her father in the study and said, 'Papa, I am going to allow you a farthing a month,' adding as she put the coin into his hand, 'And this is your December farthing'. Silver and gold could not have pleased him like that little



donation, and he never parted with it. The gifts a little child can give, if flowing from real gratitude, are great in the sight of Jesus.

2. *True love does new things.*—This woman invented a new way of honouring Christ, while Simon coldly kept to old poor ways. True love gives a freshness to your actions. It makes all things new, and creates a life of new obedience. Very unlike the old, worn-out, threadbare, hackneyed obedience of those to whom duty is not joy, nor law love. Grateful love is not a poor copier and imitator; it is an original and a genius, striking out ways of its own, and lighting its own fires. Rather, I should say, its fires are kindled not at a neighbour's hearth, but by a live coal from heaven, and the generous flames shape themselves into new forms. Love does not need second-hand clothes.

3. *True love does everything beautifully.*—Great painters like Correggio have been charmed with the beauty of this deed, and have vied with one another to do justice to it. They rightly believed that her deep love gave a surpassing beauty to her features and a perfect grace to all her movements. Poured-out ointment has in that hot climate a very sweet smell, which gives a sort of rapture to the Orientals. That sweet smell is itself a parable, and represents the charm which attends all the deeds of heartfelt gratitude. For 'familiar acts are beautiful through love'. But you can never reach this heavenly beauty by striving after it. For it grows only upon those who receive all God's forgiving love, and who wish to love Him in return with the whole heart.—  
JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 85.

### A STROLL THROUGH THE FIELDS

'A sower went out to sow his seed.'—LUKE VIII, 5.

THE seed is the *Word of God*—the lessons you learn from the Bible; and those who *teach* are the sowers. But what are the *fields*? Well, you are the *fields*.

We go out across the farm-yard, and through the gate, and here is the first field, 'the hard field'.

'Ah,' says the farmer, with a sigh, 'I can do nothing with this field, the ground is so hard'; and as he strikes it with his stick, it rings as if it were a stone. 'And yet you don't know what trouble I have taken with it. It is so hard that I can get nothing into it: more like a road than a field.'

I think you know that field. In the Sunday school, and in the house of God, and in the home, I have often seen that field. Lesson after lesson is sown, and all sorts of good seed, but nothing seems to go in. The love of God, the story of Jesus, the wickedness of sin, all seem to be lost. The heart is so dreadfully hard, that no seed can get under the surface.

This is very sad. 'Will it always be so hard, farmer?' you ask, wondering. And now listen to what the farmer says: 'No, no; I hope not. You remember what David says in the sixty-fifth Psalm, *Thou makest it soft with showers*. Only the rain

from heaven can loosen the hard-baked earth, and open the ground so that the seed can get in and live. We must ask our Father in heaven to send that.' So there is a cure for the hard field of our hearts. He will send upon us His Holy Spirit, then the hardness is gone. The hard field becomes the good ground, and brings forth much fruit.

Leaving this field, we pass on until we come to a gate, and stop to look at the next field. 'Now,' says the farmer, 'this is my "weedy field".'

There is no mistake about that; weedy enough, indeed. As we come along by the hedge, our finger is stung by a tall nettle; and as we get out of the way of that, we are pricked by a sharp-leaved fellow with his gay red cap on his head—the thistle. But they are not all such disagreeable weeds as these. There is a patch of yellow charlock, and the pretty wild convolvulus, and the scarlet poppy, and many other flowers. Yet they are all weeds. They have no business there, and they prevent the good seed from coming forth.

'You would scarcely believe how much seed I have put into this field,' the farmer tells us. 'And now look at it! Why, if I had never sown a grain it could scarcely have been worse.'

Ah! who does not know the weedy fields? Boys and girls who have been carefully taught and anxiously looked after, and yet there came nothing but weeds. These boys with the good seed sown in them, began to quarrel afterwards; so there came nettles and thorns instead of good fruit. This girl has the good seed in her heart, but she begins to think unkind thoughts, and perhaps to say spiteful things; so comes a prickly thistle instead of good seed.

And these flowers—they were weeds because they were *in the wrong place*. Very good in a garden, but here, where they choked much good seed, they were very bad. Laughing is a good thing, but laughing in the wrong place is a weed. Talking is a good thing, and nothing is more foolish than to think that children should be seen and not heard. If God has given you ears and a tongue—two ears and one tongue, remember—He does not intend you to be deaf and dumb. But talking in the wrong place helps to fill up the weedy field.

We can clear the weedy field; but this must be your prayer, '*Create in me a clean heart, O God!*'

Passing from that field, the farmer says in a low whisper, 'Now if you go quietly, and cross this lane, and up the bank to the next gate, you will see a strange sight. This is "the bird field".'

Directly our heads appear, up fly all sorts of birds. There are swift wood-pigeons, that go flying into the distance; there are lazy rooks, wheeling into the air, and flapping out of danger with a 'caw, caw,' as much as to say, 'We are not caught yet'. The blackbirds fly screaming into the hedge, and little birds rise up from the field in a cloud.

And whilst we lean over the gate listening to the merry lark, we can't help thinking that we know

many fields just as badly off as this. How many boys and girls there are in whom all the good seed is eaten up by the fowls of the air; and who does not know the names of many of these birds?

A busy bold little bird that steals much good seed on all sides, is called *Inattention*. Then there is the *chattering Magpie*, a great thief; busy whispering here and there, and humming and buzzing; a very destructive bird is this.

Then there is another bird that is almost worse than these. He steals very much more good seed and spoils as much as he steals. Can you guess his name? He never sings. He hears the others singing on the other side of the hedge sometimes, but he himself is as dumb as the bat—it is *Always late*, who doesn't come in time for the hymn.

There is one bird more that I have found in Sunday schools. In some places he is so much disliked that they keep people to go round and kill him wherever they can find him. He keeps the field from getting any good seed at all. His name is *Absent*. Take care, and never let him come near you.

One day as I was going through the fields I met a little sharp-eyed fellow standing by the stile as if he were very glad to see anybody in that lonely place. In his hands he held two pieces of stick that he kept knocking together with a loud noise. 'Click—clack, click—clack,' went the little fellow. 'What are you doing, my boy?' I asked. He was making such a noise that he could not hear what I said. He stopped, and then I asked him again what he was doing that for. 'Why, I'm scaring the birds, sir,' he cried out. And as a rook settled at the end of the field he ran away after it with a click—clack, click—clack, that soon sent it flying. That is what we must all do. We must all scare away birds that eat the good seed.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 77.

### BIG-HEARTED

'Who is my neighbour?'—LUKE x. 29.

Nor a very difficult question to answer, you would think. Why, he had only to go next door and inquire, if he wanted to know! Yes, but we have more neighbours than those who dwell near us; only nobody thought of this till Jesus came and taught us. Before then people asked not, 'Who is my neighbour?' but, 'Who *isn't* my neighbour? Whom am I *not* obliged to be kind to? Whom may I pass by and care nothing about?' They did not want to find out whom they should love and help, but rather to find out whom they were not *obliged* to love. As if you could love anybody because you were obliged! Why, the moment you say to love, or to sympathy, or to charity, 'You are *obliged* to do it,' it ceases to be love or sympathy or charity, and becomes duty and taxes—duty and taxes only.

Do not get this kind of religion into your heart. There is a good deal of it about, so you must watch against infection. There are people, that is, who are always asking, 'Must I do this for Christ's sake?

Must I do that?' They are always wanting to discover what is the *least* they can do to be saved. That is not love's way; love's way is to find out what is the *most* it can do, and it does not wait to be obliged at all; it simply does it because it will please the Lord. That is the right religion—the religion which asks not, 'Who isn't my neighbour?' but 'who is?—who is the one I can help and be kind to?'

And Jesus tells us: He says it isn't the person next door, just because he is next door, or the person in the next street, because he happens to be in the next street; it is that person anywhere in all the world who needs our help, and to whom we can give it.

Be big-hearted; do not ask, 'What is the least I can do to show my love for Jesus?' but, 'What is the most?'—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 152.

### THE BEST DISH

'Mary hath chosen the good part.'—LUKE x. 42.

THE words rendered 'Mary hath chosen the good part,' mean 'Mary hath chosen the good portion, the best dish, the Benjamin's mess'. It is as though He had said to the careful and fretted housekeeper: 'You are very kind, Martha; you are doing your best to please Me, and to give Me as good a dinner as you can: and yet it is Mary who has brought Me the best dish, the food I like most. She is nourishing and refreshing My spirit with her love and sympathy. She is giving Me an opportunity of feeding her with the bread of life and the wine of the kingdom. Our fellowship with each other is the true feast. And you, O you poor Martha, are so taken up with yourainties that you are losing the feast!'

I. First, I will tell you what I think the one thing needful is. I believe it is that love for God and man which quickens and sustains the true life within us, and redeems us from all anxieties for the many things of our outward life.

And, now, think for yourselves whether that is not true. Do you remember the Young Ruler whom Jesus loved because he was so lovable, so pure, devout, aspiring, but to whom, although He loved him, He said, *One thing thou lackest?* The one thing he lacked was the one thing needful, the good portion which Mary chose. What was it, then, that this young man, who had so much, had not? It was love, love for God and man. Not that he did not love them at all. He loved God well enough to keep His commandments, so far as he understood them; and he loved men well enough to win their love in return. But he was not perfect in love. He did not love them well enough to sell all that he had, and give it to the poor, in order that he might share the homeless and troubled life of the Good Master who had given up all for Him. He had not the love which casts out all fear and all care. He could not throw himself wholly on the goodness and bounty of God, and pursue what he felt to be the best and noblest aims at all risks and costs. He

had not the love which breeds so true and constant a trust in God as to make all that is God's ours, which makes us rich even when we are poor, and strong even when we are weak, and glad even when we are sorrowful. And hence he left the best Man he had ever met, and fell short of the best and highest life of which he had ever caught a glimpse. In other words, the best dish was set before him, and he would not eat of it.

But what he lacked Mary had. She counted the world well lost, if only she could win Christ and follow Him. Nothing was too good for Him; nothing either too small or too great to be given up for Him, or consecrated to His use: *nothing*—from a dinner to the costly alabaster vase full of precious ointment. And why did she love Him with this utter devotion, this all-forsaking, all-sacrificing, all daring enthusiasm? Because she saw God in Him; because words of eternal life came from His mouth; because she felt that in Him the very loftiest and noblest ideals and aims of human life stood, 'breathing human breath' before her; because she felt that to share His life, His loving devotion to God and man, must be the highest good. Even from the little we are told of her we may be quite sure that Mary was capable of all things—all sacrifices, all toils, all heroisms; that she counted neither life nor the good things of life dear to her, if only she might engage in the service and share the love of Christ. We may feel sure, we do feel sure, that if He had said to *her*, as He said to the young ruler, 'Sell all that thou hast, and follow Me,' she would have sold all that she had without a pang, and followed Him to the end of the world. In short, she knew that this all-trusting and devoted love is the best thing, the best dish or portion, life has to offer; the one thing needful, the one thing sufficient.

II. *Love*, then, the love of God, a love so true that it breeds trust, and a trust so true that it redeems us from all care and fear—this is the best dish, the best portion, the one thing needful; the one thing, lacking which we lack all, whatever else we have. This is the dish of which Mary ate with Christ, and of which the Young Ruler refused to eat, at least for a time.—SAMUEL COX, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 113.

## RELIGIOUS HUMBUGS

LUKE XI. 42.

I. **HUMBUG** is a compound of *hum*, to cheat, and *bug*, to charm falsely. The thing called humbug is always detested by honest and upright characters wherever it manifests itself, but when associated with religion it is positively loathed. It is like mixing together the odour of the honeysuckle and the stench of the sewer, or the music of the harp with the screech of the peacock. The association reveals not only an absurdity and an incongruity that jars and irritates, but a 'corruption and a putrescence that sickens and offends'. Of all the objectionable creatures on God's earth, therefore, the most objectionable is the 'religi-

ous humbug'. And of all the hateful practices of sinful and mistaken men, the cultivation and the manifestation of this hybrid thing is the most insulting to God and the most degrading to man.

II. **Consider the Effect of this 'Religious Humbug' upon its Cultivators.**—Man always and everywhere is the living embodiment of his religion. There is a blind weaver in one of J. M. Barrie's books who professes to tell what is the religion of every man who passes his window from the sound of his footsteps. We are not sure as to the effect of one's religious creed upon the movement of his feet, but we can testify from a life-long observation to the fact of its being reflected in one's facial expression. There are not a few downright offensive humbugs who are simply mistaken—honestly mistaken—in their views of things. Of course they are quite as hard to bear sometimes as the others, but you think differently of them, though you feel the same towards them. These have a thimbleful or two of grace hidden away in the recesses of their souls, but they have not made the right use of it. The majority of humbugs, however, are of the class which our Lord denounced as white sepulchres—they make religion the vehicle to advance their own mean and selfish purposes. In themselves they are standing insults to God, and a standing disgrace to humanity.

Young people, we appeal to you as those who will be largely responsible for the kind of Christianity that will be handed down to the twentieth century. In forming and in living your own religion, have no model but Christ! In endeavouring to live the Christ-life in the world, lay no stress upon the way this, that, and the other person says you ought to live it. Look to Christ alone for guidance, for light, and for information; then the result will be worthy of Christ. The intelligent, the broad-minded, the large-hearted members of the race will be drawn towards Christianity as you represent it, and find that they are elevated and ennobled in adopting and living it themselves! We invite you to—

III. **Consider its Effects on its Witnesses.**—It is a very lamentable fact that no other cause has alienated so many people, especially young people, from religion as 'religious humbug'. To be unreal and deceptive in regard to what is professed as the most sacred thing in the world, is a crime that creates one of the strongest loathings ever nourished in the human breast. The lust for wealth, the greed for power, the ambition for popularity, the desire for fame, and other similar feelings, have, from time to time, produced types of humanity we are ashamed to own as fellow-beings. But our souls have not revolted so entirely against any of these as they do against the man who affects religion. Religion, pure and undefiled, to be admired needs but to be seen. But religiosity, however thoroughly cultivated, needs but to be taught to be cordially hated. Piety, honest and unaffected, needs but to be witnessed to be ardently desired as a possession; but pietism, however good an imitation of the other, needs but to be under-



stood to be despised and rejected. Goodness, genuine and thorough, needs but to be known absolutely to be loved passionately and universally; but goodness, however beautifully dressed, needs but to be discovered to be condemned and ostracised from all upright souls.

We call upon you not to measure the Apostles of Christianity by the Judases and the Demases, but by the Johns and the Peters. Do not measure Christians by the humbings, but by the lofty characters—the Frances Willards, the George Müllers, the William Ewart Gladstones. Christ's religion is Sunshine, Music, Love. On all this fair earth there is nothing fairer than the life which is lived after a model of Christ's own. Every flower that blooms in the face of the sun, every green leaf that spreads in the warm breezes of June, every gold-tipped cloudlet spread out on the blue expanse of heaven, every seven-hued rainbow that spans the green space between river and brook, every caressing sunbeam that writes peace and life on the face of nature—they all contain some phase of beauty which is peculiarly their own—they all reflect the highest glory on the Divine Artist which fashioned and made them; but if you want to see His highest product, His *Magnum Opus*, the most beautiful of all the things He delights in, you must look at the Christian life at its best. This is the life we plead that you will strive to live, the life that is life indeed.—H. ELWYN THOMAS, *Pulpit Talks to Young People*, p. 51.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS

'Take heed and beware of covetousness.'—LUKE XII. 15.

I. The First Reason Why we should Mind this Warning is 'That Covetousness will Destroy our Happiness'.—The true secret of being happy is to mind what God tells us. This is what David means when he says: 'Then shall I not be ashamed'—or then shall I be truly happy—'when I have respect unto all Thy commandments' (Ps. cxix. 6). This proves the truth of what has just been said—that minding God is the secret of true happiness. You remember it was just so with Adam and Eve when they were in the garden of Eden. So long as they minded what God told them they were perfectly happy. But as soon as they left off minding God, and made up their minds to eat of the fruit of the tree of which God had said they must not eat, then they lost all their happiness.

And it is just the same with ourselves. God requires us to love Him with all our hearts, and to keep His commandments. If we do this it will surely make us happy. But if we let the love of money, or any other feeling which God has forbidden, take the place of His love in our hearts, then it is impossible for us to be happy.

There was once a nobleman living in Scotland who was very rich. But his covetousness, or love of money, was very great. Whenever he received any money he turned it into gold and silver, and stowed it away in a great chest which he kept in a strong

vault that had been built for this purpose down in the cellar.

One day a farmer, who was one of his tenants, came in to pay his rent. But when he had counted out the money he found that it was just one farthing short; yet this rich lord was such a miser that he refused the farmer a receipt for the money until the other farthing was paid. His home was five miles distant. He went there and came back with the farthing. He settled his bill and got his receipt.

Then he said, 'My lord, I'll give you a shilling if you'll let me go down into your vault and look at your money'.

His lordship consented, thinking that was an easy way to make a shilling. So he led the farmer down into the cellar and opened his big chest, and showed him the great piles of gold and silver that were there. The farmer gazed at them for a while, and then said:—'Now, my lord, I am as well off as you are.'

'How can that be?' asked his lordship.

'Why, sir,' said the farmer, 'you never use any of this money. All that you do with it is to look at it. I have looked at it too, and so I'm just as rich as you are.'

That was true. The love of that selfish lord for his money made him think of it day and night, and the fear lest some robber should steal it took away all his comfort and happiness, and made him perfectly miserable.

Three men who were once travelling together found a large sum of money on the road. To avoid being seen they went into the woods near by to count out the money and divide it among themselves. They were not far from a village, and as they had eaten up all their food they concluded to send one of their number, the youngest of the company, into the village to buy some more food, while they would wait there till he came back.

He started on his journey. While walking to the village he talked to himself in this way: 'How rich my share of this money has made me! But how much richer I should be if I only had it all! And why can't I have it? It is easy enough to get rid of those other two men. I can get some poison in the village and put it into their food. On my return I can say that I had my dinner in the village, and don't want to eat any more. Then they will eat the food and die, and so I shall have all this money instead of only having one-third of it.'

But while he was talking to himself in this way, his two companions were making a different arrangement. They said to each other, 'It is not necessary that this young man should be connected with us. If he was out of the way we could each have the half of this money instead of only one-third. Let us kill him as soon as he comes back.' So they got their daggers ready, and as soon as the young man came back they plunged their daggers into him and killed him.

They then buried his dead body, and sat down to eat their dinner of the poisoned food which had been

brought to them. They had hardly finished their dinner before they were both seized with dreadful pains, which soon ended in their death. And here we see how the happiness and the lives of those three men were destroyed by the love of money. The first reason why we ought to mind this warning, and beware of covetousness, is because it will destroy our happiness.

**II. The Second Reason Why we should Mind this Warning is 'That Covetousness will Injure our Usefulness'.**—One of the ways in which we can make ourselves useful is by the right use of our money. It is not necessary that we should be rich in order to be useful. If we are not covetous, we may do much good with very small sums of money.

**III. Covetousness will Lessen or Lose our Reward.**—We know how it is with farmers. At the close of the summer the time for harvest comes. Then they expect to reap their fields and stow away the crops gathered there in their barns. And intelligent, right-minded farmers are always very careful not to do anything that will be likely to lessen or lose their harvests. They know very well that if they do some things or neglect to do some others, the effect will be bad upon their harvest. If they should neglect to plough their ground; if they should not sow the right kind of seed; or if they should not sow it at the right time, their harvest must suffer from it. Either they will have no harvest at all, or else it will be poor and unsatisfactory.

Now we are just like farmers in this respect. The present life is our seed-time for eternity, the time for our ploughing and sowing. And the reward which God promises to those who are faithful in ploughing and sowing is the harvest that awaits us in heaven. And what that reward or harvest will be must depend entirely on how we are living, and what we are doing now. If we are real Christians, trying to serve God faithfully, and are making a right use of the money He gives us, and of the opportunities of usefulness which He affords us—then we may look for a glorious reward when our harvest-time comes. But if we are loving money instead of loving God, and are not using our money as God wants us to use it, then we are doing that which will certainly have the effect of either lessening our reward or of causing us to lose it altogether. We are making it certain that our harvest will either be very poor and unsatisfactory, or else that we shall have no harvest at all.

Some years ago, near Atlanta, in Georgia, there lived a man who was a member of the church. He was a person of some influence in that neighbourhood. But he was a covetous man, very fond of money, and always unwilling to pay his debts. He had a little grand-daughter, about nine years old, who was living with him. She was a bright, intelligent young Christian. She had heard of her grandpa's love of money, and his unwillingness to pay his debts spoken of, and it grieved her very much.

One morning, as they were sitting at breakfast, she said, 'Grandpa, I had a dream about you last night.'

'Had you? Well, tell me what it was.'

'I dreamed that you died last night. I saw the angels come to take you to heaven. They took you in their arms, and began to go up till they were almost out of sight. Then they stopped and flew round awhile, but without going any higher. Presently they came down with you and laid you on the ground, when their leader said:—

"My friend, you are too heavy for us. We can't carry you up to heaven. It's your debts that weigh you down. If you settle with those you owe, we will come for you again before long."

The old gentleman was very much touched by this. He saw the danger he was in from his covetousness. He resolved to struggle against it. The first thing after breakfast he went to his room and in earnest prayer asked God to forgive his sin, and to help him to overcome it. Then he went out and paid all his debts; and after that was always prompt and punctual in paying what he owed. So he minded the warning of the text, and was kept from losing his reward. Not long after this he really died, and then the angels had no trouble in carrying him up to heaven.—*RICHARD NEWTON, Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children, p. 34.*

### GOD'S FOOL

LUKE XII. 20.

This man, to all outward appearance, was a spirited, enterprising man, looking well and keenly after his interests, prospering in his calling, and making the best of his possessions; and yet God, who knew him well, who saw his motives, who understood the most hidden thought of his soul, calls him 'a fool'. The question very naturally arises: 'Why?' There are at least four reasons. God calls him a 'fool'—

**I. Because he Ignored his Maker.**—On that memorable night of his life when he reviews the evolution of his prosperity, he ascribes all his success to himself. God is absolutely ignored. It is himself who has done it all, his own industry, his own sagacity, his own talent, his own genius. God has contributed nothing! At least, one might think so by hearing his account of it. He does not absolutely say with his mouth that God did nothing, but like his prototype, which the Psalmist speaks of, he says so in his heart. He made no declaration at all upon the subject, but simply ignored the idea as one unworthy of even a thought. The very highest insult you can offer a man is to ignore him, not only the small-souled abominably conscious manikin, who thinks the eyes of the world are made to rest on his perfections, and that it might as well have no eyes at all if it does not see them, but the large-souled, generous, dignified man of sense and worth. You cannot vex and grieve him more deeply and painfully in any way than by ignoring him.

**II. Because he made Self the Centre of all**

Things.—Listen to his soliloquy, 'This will I do'. His ruling spirit is selfishness. He lives and moves and has his being in a capital I. His mean life's motto is 'Get all you can, and keep all you get'. How sordid and selfish it all sounds. *My* fruits, *my* goods, and *my* barns and *my* soul—all narrowed down to the limited circle of an ego. Self was his pole-star. He cared for himself, and for none besides; to please himself was his all-absorbing purpose.

III. **Because he Regards the Future as his Own.**—At first you scarcely thought God fair in calling this man a fool, he looked so wise, so rational, so far-seeing; but the nearer you come to him and the more you hear of his soliloquy the plainer it appears why God so branded him. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years."' Because he had the goods he thought he had the years also. Because he had, through God's grace, prospered in the past he assumes he is lord of the future. We are afraid that God's fool has more imitators in this phase of his foolishness than in any other.

When you prepare for the future there must be another by your side—He who is always the same. Do this on ever so large a scale, and God will bless, prosper, guide, and love you. God calls this man 'a fool'—

IV. **Because he Attempts to Feed his Soul with Bodily Food.**—This man's address to his soul is one of the most brazen utterances ever recorded among human sayings. 'Soul, thou hast much goods . . . eat, drink, and be merry.' These 'goods' really formed the whole of this man's life. Apart from them he had no thought, no property, no ambition. He was known by his possessions.

We all shrink to-day from the suggestion that a man's life consists of his 'goods'. And yet, how many live and act as if they were. How little of manhood and womanhood there is about some persons we know. Take away their goods, their gold, their land, their property, and there is nothing left, only a miserable grinning thing whom nobody likes, loves, or respects. In the midst of their wealth they are loved, courted, and admired, but by themselves they are scorned and hated, and deserve the treatment.

Young people, beware of seeking possessions and not life. Beware of so setting your hearts upon such things that you will lose yourself in them. 'What's the value of this estate?' asked one gentleman of another as they passed the wide and fertile acres around a baronial mansion. 'I don't know, but I can tell you how much they cost their latest owner.' 'How much?' 'They cost him his soul.' Alas, how many there are who have bought their property with the same price. They have lost their manhood in what they have acquired, so that they are only known to-day through and by what they have. The promising young man is lost in the athlete. The graceful young woman is hidden by the courted

coquette. *The thing paid for by a soul* is that which gives a name and character to the man or woman who disappeared when the price was paid. And some think that there is pleasure and happiness to be obtained in this way. They may as well think that heaven is on the way to hell. Happiness, true happiness, is only obtainable when the soul is fed by the things of the soul, when the higher nature is fed at the table of God.—H. ELWYN THOMAS, *Pulpit Talks to Young People*, p. 84.

### RAVENS, LILIES, AND SPARROWS

'Consider the Ravens . . . Consider the lilies. . . Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?'—LUKE XII. 24, 27, 6.

CONSIDER the ravens, the lilies, and the sparrows. Watch them closely. Observe their habits. Think about them. Learn the lessons which they teach. Holiday time is coming on. Many of you will be in the country, enjoying yourselves among the birds and the flowers. Do not forget to thank God for the enjoyment He gives you through the beauties of nature, and try to learn something from His works about your Heavenly Father and His love.

Why did Jesus say, 'Consider the ravens and the lilies'? He was teaching His disciples not to be anxious. Do you know what *anxiety* is? You know a little. Some boys and girls are anxious about their lessons, and anxious about their examinations, whether they will pass, or get a prize. Fathers and mothers of large families are often anxious about food and clothes for their children. John wears out his boots very quickly, and Mary is wanting a new frock, and there are a number of little hungry mouths to be fed at dinner-time. How in the world are you to provide for them month after month and year after year. 'Consider the ravens. Consider the lilies.' Did you ever see an anxious raven? The flowers are always well dressed; and the birds sing merrily, and seem as happy as the day is long. Work as hard as you can at your lessons and your business, but never be anxious. 'Do your best and leave the rest.' Boys and girls are not anxious about their clothes or their dinners, for they think father and mother will provide; and fathers and mothers might learn a lesson from their children, and remember that 'the Lord will provide'.

I. **Consider the Ravens.**—Why should Jesus choose ravens of all the birds of the air for His object-lesson? Perhaps because *they are hungry birds*. Sometimes you are *ravenously* hungry—that is, you are as hungry as a raven. But there is food enough in God's larder for all the ravens in the world. 'He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry;' and even in the time of famine the ravens were so well fed that after their own wants were satisfied they brought bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, to God's prophet Elijah.

Again, *ravens are very plain birds*. I do not like to call them ugly, but certainly they are not



beautiful. You would not make a pet of a raven as you do of a canary or a robin redbreast. And the raven has a most unpleasant and unmusical voice; he seems to be always hoarse, and does not sing but croak. However, that does not matter. He is hungry and he 'cries,' and that is enough for God. It is not the fine words of a prayer, but our need and our earnestness which go to our Father's heart, and Jesus turns to His anxious disciples and says, 'God feedeth the ravens; how much more are ye better than the fowls?'

**II. Consider the Lilies.**—In the beautiful months of June and July the gardens and fields are full of flowers. Lilies and lilacs and laburnums and sweet-peas and honeysuckles and roses. The country is gay with their beauty, and the air is scented with their fragrance. Little girls are sometimes proud of their smart new frocks, and princes and princesses of their rich robes and court dresses, but look at the finest fabrics through the microscope, and you will find they are coarse and clumsy by the side of the lilies of the field. 'I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Now lilies have but a very short life. They are not like boys and girls, and men and women, for whom Christ has died, that they may live with Him for ever in His glorious home in heaven. 'If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?'

**III. Consider the Sparrows.**—Of all birds they are the commonest and the cheapest. 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?' In Matthew x. 29 Jesus says, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?' They are each worth half a farthing, but if you take five the seller will give them for the price of four. Something like 'Oranges! a penny each, three for twopence'. Poor little birds! they are very cheap—of very little value—rather shabby to look at—they have no strength like falcons or eagles, no song like blackbirds or thrushes, no plumage like doves or humming-birds, and there are thousands and thousands of them. I wonder how many thousands are to be found in the streets of Glasgow, and in Scotland, and in Europe, and in the world, and of all these thousands and millions 'not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.' You are made in the image of God. Christ shed His precious blood for you. Shall not all your needs be supplied? Therefore, work hard, but do not be anxious, for Jesus forbids anxiety.—F. H. ROBERTS, *Sunday Morning Talks*, p. 174.

#### THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND HIS KINGDOM

'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'—LUKE XII. 32.

St. AUGUSTINE, the Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, was once sitting on the beach writing a book about the Mystery of the Ever Blessed Trinity, and he saw a little boy

digging a hole in the sand with a spade, just as you might see on the beach at Brighton. St. Augustine asked him what he was doing, and the little boy answered that he was going to put the great ocean into the hole he was digging; and when the Saint told him he would never be able to do such a thing, he told St. Augustine how equally impossible it was for him to ever explain the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity in a book.

Although we cannot know very much about Jesus we can all get to know Him, for He says, 'I am the Good Shepherd, and know Mysheep, and am known of Mine'. So it must be the wish and earnest prayer of all to know the Good Shepherd. We get to know Him by always listening for His voice, when He speaks to us through our conscience, and obeying when we hear it. 'The sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.' And we get to know Him by praying to Him, and by telling him all our little troubles and our sins, and asking Him to help us. We get to know Him by telling Him our joys, and thanking Him for them, telling Him everything, just as we should tell our friends everything; and after all Jesus is our dearest friend; for He came down from His glorious throne in heaven, and died for us, to save us from the consequences of our sins, and then He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for each one of us there, that we might live with Him.

You are some of the lambs the Good Shepherd loves so well.

The Good Shepherd, once Himself a child, is the children's Saviour who said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'.

So you see how much the Good Shepherd loves His lambs; and the more you get to know Him the more you will love Him; and He has sent me here to tell you about the kingdom He has gone to prepare for you.

Let us think then, first, of **The Way to the Kingdom**. Well, the way to that kingdom is along 'the Paths of Righteousness'. But it is not easy to keep to 'the Paths of Righteousness'.

So the Good Shepherd helps us. When He sees us straying He speaks to us through our conscience, and tells us of the danger we are in; and if we obey His voice He will lead us back into 'the Paths of Righteousness' which lead to the kingdom. We are not His sheep unless we obey Him when He speaks to us. His own sheep 'follow Him, for they know His voice'.

Then He says, 'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep'. He knows you by the name given you when you became His own in Holy Baptism. He knows all about you. He knows whether you are trying to please Him. Remember that the way to the kingdom is along 'the Paths of Righteousness'; and it is by listening to the Good Shepherd's voice that you will keep to those paths.

Once when I was travelling in Wales a man in the same railway carriage told me he had just found out the happiness of loving the Good Shepherd, and had

just been baptised; and when we parted he said, 'There's no life like it'. And you too, when you try hard to follow Jesus along 'the Paths of Righteousness,' will find the joy of living close to Jesus, and will be able to say from your hearts that there is no life like it.

Let us think of **The End of our Journey.**

It may end at any time. We ought to think of that sometimes, and to ask ourselves, before it is too late, if we are journeying along the road that leads to the kingdom Jesus has prepared for us.

Death is the end of our journey, and we can never take this journey over again. Remember there are two roads. There is the narrow way along 'the Paths of Righteousness' that leads to Life, and there is the broad way leading to Destruction. The journey will not last for ever, but the place to which we are journeying will last for ever. We shall live for ever either with Jesus or in that dreadful place prepared for those who refuse Him. It entirely depends on which road we take now, as to which of these two kingdoms we find ourselves in at last. It is 'Our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom'; so if we would reign for ever with Jesus in heaven, how careful we must be not to stray from 'the Paths of Righteousness' now. The end of the journey will come for all of us, sooner or later; and if we have been trying to keep to 'the Paths of Righteousness' we have no reason to be afraid of the hour of our death, because the Good Shepherd will not leave us to die alone. We can say to Him, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me'.

Think of **The Entrance into the Kingdom.** When we have come to the end of our journey we shall have to wait until that day when we are judged.

The Good Shepherd will be our judge, and we shall none of us be able to escape from judgment.

'Before Him shall be gathered all nations.' Let us see what will happen to them. 'He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left.' He will say to the sheep, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. That will be the everlasting reward of those who try all they can to please the Good Shepherd; but it will be very different with the goats—those wicked people who strayed into the broad way leading to destruction, and refused to listen to the Good Shepherd's voice. Jesus will say to them, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'.

Now which of these two kingdoms are *you* journeying to? You are all on your way to one or the other of them.

We shall all end by finding ourselves in *one* of these two kingdoms, for there is no third kingdom.

The end of the year is like a milestone on our journey. We are a year nearer to living with Jesus, or a year nearer to that other kingdom.

The Good Shepherd longs to welcome you to the place He has gone to prepare for you in heaven. But He wants you to know that it will be your fault, and not His fault, if you never get there; for He never sees you straying from the path which leads to that kingdom without speaking to you in a way that you cannot mistake, and telling you of your danger.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 171.

### THE LITTLE FLOCK ENCOURAGED

'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'—LUKE XII. 32.

If you were asked what commandment in the Bible comes the most often, do you think you should know? Shall I tell you which commandment God gives most frequently? 'Fear not.' He says this more than eighty times—I believe, eighty-four times; this is much oftener than any other commandment. 'Fear not.'

You know if we are afraid it looks as if we did not trust God. If anybody is afraid in the dark, if anybody is afraid of thunder, if anybody is afraid of going to bed alone, if anybody is afraid of robbers, if anybody is afraid of wild beasts, if anybody is afraid that God will not forgive him (when he asks Him), if anybody is afraid that God will not guide him all along till he gets to heaven—then he does not trust God.

Suppose you were told to take care of a little child, should you like that little child to cry and say, 'I am afraid'? You would feel yourself affronted if that child did not trust you. If anybody were leaning upon your arm for support, would not you like it? I think you would—I should; I do like it, and I think you all like to lean upon some one's arm. God likes you to lean upon His arm. God does not like it, when He is taking care of us, for us to say, 'We are afraid'. It pleases God when you trust Him, when you think what a good God He is, what a kind God He is. I do not wonder that the Lord is displeased if we are afraid, when He says 'Fear not,' eighty-four times.

Then I wonder to whom God says it? There are some people whom I shall call 'Don't-care people'. I know some boys and girls too who look as if they said, 'I don't care; I am not afraid of anybody or anything'. But I think that this spirit—that this kind of boy or girl—displeases God more than anything else. It is like Cain when he killed his brother Abel. It is like Joseph's cruel brethren who put poor little Joseph down in the pit, and did not seem to care for anybody or anything. I hope none of you are these 'don't-care people' as to what God says.

You see if God's children did not sometimes 'fear,' God would not say 'Fear not,' to show that they do 'fear'. I tell you what you are to 'fear'—'fear' to grieve God. In other respects God says, 'Fear not'.

Now we must look to see to whom it is that God says, 'Fear not'. It is called, what? 'Little flock.'

Now will you think with me what is meant by 'a little flock'? 'Little flock.'

There was somebody who once asked before us, 'Who are the little flock?' and 'where are they?' Turn to the first chapter of Song of Solomon and look at the seventh and eighth verses, and you will find something said about this 'little flock'. Somebody says, 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth (that is Christ), where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.'

If you want to know where the 'little flocks' are, I will tell you where you must go, you must watch where the 'footsteps' are to be found of all those good saints who lived before you, and you will find them all by the 'shepherds' tents'.

I hope you are a little 'kid' by the 'shepherd's tent'. I believe the 'shepherds' mean God's ministers, and the 'shepherds' tents' mean baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and praying, and all the ordinances of God. The 'little flocks' love these things, and are to be found in 'shepherds' tents' in God's ministry, and loving holy things, and going in 'the footsteps' where all the 'flocks' went before them.

So that this 'little flock,' those who walk in the 'footsteps' after having forsaken the world and all bad things, and walk with good saints, are like 'kids by the shepherds' tents'. That is the 'little flock'.

Now why is it called 'little'? A 'little flock'. Perhaps it is because there are so few in it; there are very few.

A young man told me the other day that he was seven years at Eton, and he did not believe all the time that there was one real Christian there. Now he could not tell. Very often religious boys are to be found where you do not think they are, and he might have made a great mistake. Very often God's people are hidden people. We cannot tell; but I am sure there are very few, and I never knew a school yet where there were a great many. There are but few, and so it is a 'little flock'.

If you turn to Jeremiah you will see how God makes a 'little flock,' you will not wonder it is 'little' when you read that. Jeremiah in. 14—'I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion'. So you see there are only to be 'two' or 'three'. Nobody naturally tries to love God; and if nobody seeks to love God, or to care about his soul, he must not wonder at 'the flock' being so 'little'.

Do you not think the reason is not only because so few love God, but because there are so many 'little' lambs in it? there are so many children in it. Turn to Isaiah xl. 11—'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young'. So you see that here

are three or four things spoken of, and everything about 'little lambs'. There are some 'little lambs' in His fold if there is nothing else.

Shall I tell you about a 'little lamb'? There was a little girl whose name was Annie Lee, and she had a great many very pretty things; but the thing she loved best of all was a little pet lamb. Everybody admired Annie Lee's little pet lamb. One morning little Annie came running into the room, when her father and mother were seated at the breakfast table, with the tears running down her cheeks, and she said, 'Oh, father, father, my lamb is lost'. The father said, 'Never mind, my Annie, I dare say we shall find it. Go and tell the gardener to look for it. She ran out and told the gardener to seek for the lost lamb, and before they had done breakfast in came the gardener with the lamb in his arms, and little Annie became quite happy.

After breakfast Annie's mother took her upon her knees (she was about six years old), and she said, 'You know, Annie, you were once a lost lamb, and the kind Shepherd came for you and brought you back'. Little Annie said, 'How kind of the Shepherd to come and bring me to you'.

The day went on and little Annie kept thinking about the kind Shepherd that brought her back; but the same night poor little Annie had the croup, a very sad disease, very, very sad; and her mother came, and her father, and they cried over her, and the doctor came and gave her medicine, and everything was tried to make her well, but they could not cure her, and so she died. But just before little Annie died she said to her mother, 'Mamma, the kind Shepherd has come for His lost lamb—may He have it?' Jesus loves the 'little lambs,' and so He took her.

I should like to tell you here a thing you do not perhaps quite know. You remember the twenty-third Psalm—'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.' That is what I want you to look at—'He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.' Now I never understood that till a Jew explained it, and I should like you to know how the Jew explained it to me.

He said in the land of Palestine—the Holy Land—they generally put the lambs in the fields in the evening, by the side of the River Jordan. There are beautiful fields by the River Jordan, and so the shepherd, as the night is coming on, puts them in these fields to lie down by 'the green pastures'. And sometimes it happens in the night that the snow melts on the top of Mount Lebanon, and runs down the banks of the river, and makes it swell and rise, and overflow its banks, and the little lambs are caught up by the water and carried down, down, down, miles and miles down the river; and when the sun rises in the morning you may see a shepherd going down the river with his crook after the poor little lambs that are struggling in the water and he



will hook up the little lambs, and bring them back again to the field, and the Jew said that is what it means, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He restoreth my soul'.

Sometimes little girls and boys think they are quite safe—they are beside 'still waters' and 'green pastures'—and presently something carries them away, away; and what would become of them if somebody did not bring them back again?

One thing more. Do you not think they are called 'a little flock' because everybody in that 'flock' thinks so 'little' of himself? Everybody who is a Christian thinks 'little' of himself, or ought to do so. If anybody thinks much of himself he is by no means a Christian. Did you ever wonder what 'Paul' meant? You know Paul's name was Saul; and why was he called Paul? There are different reasons why he was called Paul, but I will tell you one—because Paul means 'little'. Saul felt himself to be such a great sinner that he left off loving the world, and lived and worked for God, and then they called him Paul—the 'little one'. Yet what a great man he was! still he felt himself 'a little one'—'the least of all the Apostles'; 'the little one'. All good Christians should think themselves so.

There was once a great Roman emperor going through Rome in grand triumph, surrounded by all his attendants, his courtiers, and his soldiers; he himself was riding in a chariot, accompanied by sound of trumpets—oh! so grand! The emperor was in the midst of that great procession, when a little child came out of the crowd and ran up to this great man, and of course he was put back—they cried out: 'Go back, little child—go back—go back! He is your emperor!' And the little child said, 'Yes, he is your emperor, but he is my father'. Oh! how beautiful it is to say of the Lord, 'He is my Father!' 'Your Father!'

How did He become your Father? If you look to Jeremiah again you will see. Jeremiah iii. 19—'But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me.'

I once heard of a nobleman who went up to the top of his spacious park with a friend who lived near, and when they reached the top of the park and saw the beautiful prospect, the nobleman began to show his friend all his fine estate. 'There you see those beautiful trees, those splendid fruits, those rich lands—they are all mine—as far as your eye can stretch—all those rivers are mine—all those cows and those fields are mine—and those are my houses where my labourers live.' The friend said, 'Well, but the poor old woman who lives in that cottage there can say more than you can, my lord'. 'What is that?' She has more than you, my lord, she can say "Christ is mine".

Can you say that? If you can indeed say 'Christ is mine,' you have more than that nobleman's estate. 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom' at last, and be sure He will take care of your wants now.

There was once a poor man toiling up a hill with a pack on his back, and a gentleman riding up in his carriage said to him, 'Come and sit in the carriage and I will take you up the hill'. This poor man rode up the hill, but he did not take the pack off his back; so the gentleman said, 'If I carry you, I think you need not carry your pack'. Therefore remember that if God carries you, He will carry all your burdens—you need not carry them. 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

What is 'the kingdom'? Let me say a word or two about that. Remember 'the kingdom of heaven' must come to us before we go to that. He that has ever gone to the 'kingdom of heaven' when he died, has had the kingdom of heaven come to him while he lived.

In Romans xiv. 17, it is said, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'. Thus we have 'the kingdom of heaven' in our hearts when we have 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'. If we have that then we have good hope, and when we die we shall go to heaven.

And do you know you are all trained to be 'kings'? I wonder how the Prince of Wales is trained. I should think he must be always thinking, 'Oh! I am going to be a king'. And that is what you ought to be thinking. You should say, 'I am going to be a king'. Yes, every child who is a Christian is going to be a 'king'. 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

You have heard of Charlemagne—he ordered that when he died there should be a chapel built just like the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem; and that he should not be buried like other men, but like a king, and so he said, 'Do not lay my body down, but set me upon a throne, and bury me like a king'. He was to have a room set apart for him at the side of the chapel, and there was to be a Bible opened and laid by his side when he was dead, and the sword of Charlemagne was to be laid on the other side, and upon his head a crown of gold, and a robe over his shoulders. So he was buried.

Years afterwards the emperor Otho went to see how Charlemagne looked; the chapel was opened, and he went in to see him—and what did he see? He was crumbled up into dust. There was the cowl; the crown was not destroyed, but was saved. There was Charlemagne, one of the greatest kings that ever lived—there he was, all dust.

Now I will tell you of another man. There was a poor miserable-looking old man who lived in an almshouse, I will not say where, and the poor old creature had the palsy, and if you had seen him you would have heard his shoes knocking together with the palsy, and he was sitting in his chair when a

gentleman went to see him, and said, 'Well, my friend, how do you do?' 'Oh! I am waiting—waiting.' 'Are you waiting for me?' 'No, I am waiting for my Master; for Him to bring me my crown.' 'Bring you your crown?' 'Yes, I am going to be a king.' 'How do you know that?' 'Because Christ has said it—"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom".'—**JAMES VAUGHAN.**

#### THE SHEPHERD AND HIS LITTLE FLOCK

'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'—LUKE XII. 32.

HERE surely is a beautiful text for *you!*

It is Jesus who utters it. But not now as the Great King speaking to children in the Temple, but as the good and gracious Shepherd addressing the lambs of the fold.

It tells of a little flock; a fearful flock; a tenderly watched and cared-for flock; a flock which will at last be glorified and reach the kingdom of heaven.

In speaking for a short time from these words, I shall do so in reference to you and to you alone.

I. The *First* truth you are here taught is this, that *Though Little*—(a little Flock)—*God Cares for You.*—How often does He give proof in outer nature that though the Greatest of all Beings, He loves and takes care of what is little and weak and feeble. His sun shines on the daisy and the cowslip, as well as on the cedar and the oak. His sun shines on the sparkling stream, ay on the tiny dewdrop, as well as on the vast lake or ocean. His sun warms and gladdens the insect dancing in its beams, so small that you would need the microscope to see it, as well as the kingly lion and elephant. I have seen in the Alps the lovely blue gentian nestling and shivering at the mouth of the icy glacier—quite safe; while the mighty pine was lying with upturn roots close by. God seems to have scattered the meadows all over with *little flowers*—*tender grasses*—*small mosses*—just to teach us how He loves the little as well as (shall I say more than?) the great. He has paved the ocean, not with great masses of rock—huge boulders—but with pebbles, and brittle shells, and delicate seaweed.

Look at that mother! Who of her family does she care most for? She loves them all. But her sons have grown up past boyhood; they can take care of themselves. It is the child lying in its cradle—or scarce able to walk, tottering about the room in helpless infancy. And if that child be weak or sickly, how tenderly does she sit, night by night, at its little bed! When it is startled from sleep how she rushes to its side, smooths its pillow, and kisses away its tears and fears, and sings it asleep.

God turns to you and says, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you'; Jesus loves all His family—all His children; but in accordance with the beautiful words of Zechariah, He turns His gracious hands specially on 'the little ones' (Zech. XIII. 7). I was struck some time ago, looking

over a curious old illustrated book in the British Museum Library containing symbols and pictures of the early Christian ages, how often (how generally) Christ is represented as the Good Shepherd *carrying a lamb in His arms*, as if He loved the little and the feeble of His flock the most! He loves, too, not only the little ones in years, but the lowly and unknown, the unnoticed and despised, the weak and downcast; 'the poor also, and him that hath no helper'. Never say, 'If I had been a star or a planet, a sun or a moon, God would have cared for me; but I am only a little taper, a feeble glow-worm'. Never say, 'If I had been a great spreading oak with my branches shooting outwards and upwards, God would have cared for me; but I am only a dwarfed, little, insignificant shrub'. Never say, 'If I had been a lordly eagle cleaving the skies, or a bird-of-paradise with beauteous plumage, God would have cared for me; but I am only a little timid thing twittering among the branches'.

What says Jesus? 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows' (Luke XII. 6, 7). 'Fear not, little flock!'

II. The text tells you another truth. **This World is not the True Home of the Little Flock.**—The Shepherd speaks to His little flock as if they were journeying on to pasture-ground on the everlasting hills. He does not say, 'Fear not; for lo! here is a quiet, peaceful fold on earth: here are green pastures and still waters: here is a sunny valley, a rich meadow, where you are to rest for ever!'

No! He points up to heaven, and says, 'It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'. This is not your final resting-place. You have much indeed to make you happy in this fair, beautiful world. I am never anything but displeased with those who would make this earth out to be a dismal prison-house; who would rob it in gloomy sackcloth; who would shut their eyes to its green fields and bright skies and wealth of flowers, and shut their ears to its varied songs of gladness, from the music of birds in the groves to your own merry peals of laughter at your play. Yet it is equally true that you and I, and every one of us, were born for a far better country still (Heb. XI. 16). Yes, I say again, though God has given all of us here very much to make us glad, and for which we should be very thankful, there is a voice ever heard whispering in our ears and saying, 'Arise ye, and depart, for this is *not* your rest' (Mic. II. 10).

And why cannot we be peacefully happy here?

I answer, because these great souls of ours were born for greater than the greatest things that this world can give.

I have often seen, near where I used to live in the country, two eagles. They had a roomy cage. But they were not happy. They were always bending down, and then glancing up with proud eye through the chinks in the wooden house which enclosed them

on the blue sky; and if they had had a cage with golden bars and kings or princes to serve them, they would, I am sure, have done just the same. They would never have been contented with their lot.

Our souls are like the wings of these eagles beating against the bars. The cry of the Psalmist is that of every immortal spirit—'Oh, that I had wings, . . . for then would I flee away (to heaven) and be at rest' (Ps. lv. 6).

Little flock! I repeat it, yours is a kingdom. Are you to gather straws and lose it? Or are you to love God and serve Him here, that so when you die it may only be to pass through a gateway into His glorious presence, and become joyful members of His ransomed family for ever and ever!—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 42.

### THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE

(A New Year Sermon)

'He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'—LUKE XIII. 6-9.

God is the owner, Christ is the vinedresser pleading with man for God, and with God for man, and for whose sake the uplifted hand of justice is stayed; the vineyard is God's kingdom, and the fig-tree is Israel as a whole, or each Israelite, or each Gentile in Christ's Church. This parable shows us God's great grace and man's poor return; it teaches the need of repenting at once, and bringing forth the fruits of repentance. The life-history of this fig-tree is soon told: *it was favoured but fruitless, yet spared, and yet to be judged.*

I. The Fig-Tree was Favoured.—No other fig-tree was so favoured. For it was not there by chance like a berry-bush in the woods, or a tree on the top of an old tower, the seed of which had been carried on the wings of the wind, or by a bird that, on the way to its nest, frightened by a hawk, had dropped its mouthful. The owner had deliberately planted this tree in his vineyard. Perhaps Jesus meant by this to teach the Jews that they were not as a vine, but as a fig-tree in His vineyard; that they were not the whole of His kingdom, but only a small part of it; that they had no right to occupy their favoured place for ever, and that He who had planted them there had a right to remove them if he chose; and that He would still have His vineyard after they were cast out. I may lay my hand on your head and truly say, You are that tree, you are one of God's chief favourites. No nation has a larger and better life than ours. The Briton is more favoured than the Jew ever was, and no generation of Britons has been more favoured than is ours. If you wish to feel thankful for your native land you need only to visit the other countries of Europe. And may I not say

that yours is the most favoured nook in this most favoured vineyard? You are planted, not in the open unsheltered waste, but in the Church of Christ, and in a Christian home. You are not like a little dying boy who said to the Christian friend visiting him, 'Oh, sir, do ye think I would hae ony chance wi' God? ye see I canna read ony'; or like an untaught carter I kae, who used to give a boy a penny to read to him 'blads o' the Bible'. That dying boy, that carter, was like a fig-tree growing on the roadside. You are like a fig-tree planted in a vineyard. What could have been done for you that has not been done?

II. This Fig-Tree was Fruitless, though so Favoured.—Like the bramble-bushes in the rich man's garden it had the best chance in the world, yet it had not a fig to show. The fig-tree is good for figs but for nothing else, except it be shade. It has big deep-green leaves which keep out the sun, and so we read of every one sitting under his own fig-tree. It is the ample sun-parasol of the East. Thus a fruitless fig-tree did mischief in a vineyard, for it sucked the sap from the soil and shut the sun out from the vines. It is not a question of beauty; it is rather ugly, and its soft wood is fit only for the fire. Bad enough that there should be no figs, but worse that its spreading shade should dwarf the vines, by making a cave-like space in which grapes could not ripen. This fig-tree had green leaves and gaily blushing blossoms, else the owner would not have expected figs on it; yet at the time of fruit it had nothing but leaves.

The one question for us is, fruit or no fruit. 'Fruit, fruit,' is our owner's one cry. And what is fruit, do you ask? I answer, everything that springs from a healthy Christian life—repentance, faith, love, all the graces and good works. Is that tree a picture of me? Am I fair and promising outwardly, yet fruitless? Have I leaves and nothing more? Am I a barren professor? If so, you cumber the ground and do harm to others. You overshadow those near you with evil influence, and make their lives smaller and poorer than they might have been.

III. This Tree, Favoured though Fruitless, is yet Spared.—Many poets speak of trees as having life, as thinking, feeling companions for whom they cherish an almost human attachment. The trees of our boyhood are dear to us because interwoven with memories of bright days. I have known a wood spoiled because the proprietress would not permit the cutting down of trees which she regarded as the friends of her girlhood. She seemed afraid of 'wronging the spirit in the woods'. The feeling is natural. The keeper of the vineyard had planted the fig-tree and watched its growth. It is his own, and he has a longing, lingering feeling for it. He won't give up hope of it. It may, it can bring forth fruit. He will dig about it and dung it. And so he pleads that his own tree may be spared for one other year. But if it is fruitless at the year's end, even his love must consent to the cutting of it down. 'Re-



prives,' says Matthew Henry, 'are obtained for us by others, but not pardons. These must be sought by ourselves.'

I once worshipped in a church in front of which stood a lifeless tree. By and by it became leafless and peeled and rotten, as if all God's judgments had fallen upon it. It stretched forth its bare arms to heaven in vain. The people wished to cut it down as an unsightly thing, but the minister pled that they would let it stand as a parable of a lost soul. One day he made the tree his text, and preached with great feeling on the fruitless professor. He asked his hearers to remember his appeal every time they saw the dead tree, and I think that a sort of awe came over some of the boys and girls as they looked up to the strange object-lesson at the church-door. You do not find a true parable of yourself in a tree like that, but may you not find it in the blooming fig?

**IV. The Fig-Tree, Favoured though Fruitless, and Spared, is yet to be Judged.**—God's patience is most wonderful, it goes far beyond all our thoughts and dreams, but it has limits. Between the tree and the axe there is only a prayer, and at most only a year. The vine-dresser's prayer is, 'Lord, let it alone this year also. And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.' Sparring mercy, even Christ's mercy, may be worn out. So the figless fig-tree down comes at last:—

At length he'll strike the threatened blow,  
And lay the barren fig-tree low.

To be fruitless is a greater calamity than befell those slain by Pilate at the altar, or buried under the tower of Siloam; it is the only real calamity, for it is to be an eternal failure. To fail for ever in life's chief end, to lose our one chance, no other failure can be named along with that.

But there is hope for you who have begun another year of grace. You may have good fruit, and the blame is all your own if you have none. God does not ask what is not possible, but He expects reasonable returns. And He gives you what he asks: will you take it from His hand? Good fruits come from a good and healthy tree. As there can be no fruits before there is a tree, so there can be no good works unless the man be first made good. A bad heart does not bring forth good fruits. You cannot make yourself good, but God has a plan for making you good. Fall in with God's plan, and gladly give up your whole soul to it. Yield to Christ Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. Let not Christ be to you as an unexplained parable, but try to understand how He saves and new-makes us. Let Him take you as you are and do with you what He wills, and then all good fruits will adorn your life. But without Christ's life in you, you are not a fruitful tree. You are only useless timber, and your toiling is a busy idleness.

Listen, then, to the consenting voices of this parable, and of this New Year. 'This year also' may be your last chance, and this wintry day may

be the springtime of grace in your soul. I remember a young man coming to tell me that he had gone over to the side of Christ. On the first Sabbath of a New Year he heard a sermon on this parable. It greatly interested him, he said. Thoughts of his uselessness amid many mercies rushed in upon him and melted him quite. In the fruitless fig-tree he saw himself; God helping him, he would be fruitless no longer. He began the new life with the New Year. I found him ready for every good work. His life was like an ever-green, an ever-fruitful tree.

We cannot help feeling to-day the pathos and uncertainty of life. But if you are like the good tree you need not fear the future, for, speaking in the language of this parable, death does not cut down, but transplants the fruitful tree to the paradise of God. To-morrow was to have been a bright day to one young man who worshipped with us. Amid great difficulties he had fought life's battle like a true hero, and had won. He had gained the confidence and friendship of his employers, and to-morrow he was to have become a partner in one of our famed and wealthy firms. To-morrow he was to have entered as a master the very gate at which as a poor boy he knocked with a trembling heart, and offered his services for half a crown a week. And to-morrow we meet to carry his body to the grave. Come to Christ, close with Christ, make Christ's thoughts your thoughts, take Christ's way of living, and then you may rejoice and be glad all your days; and when earth's days are done you shall pass to better joys than earth knows.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 129.

### THE CANDLE OF GRACE

**The Candle of Grace:** Love (Luke xv. 8).—This candle of grace lights us to salvation and joy.

It is a Search light to seek the lost (Luke xix. 10).

It is a Divine light to find the helpless (Ezek. xxxiv. 16).

It is a Warm light to welcome the found ones (Luke xv. 22).—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tinky Folks*, p. 39.

### THE PRODIGAL SON

(*A New Year Sermon*)

LUKE XV. 11-32.

The prodigal's history falls into three parts:—

I. From Home.

II. Homewards.

III. At Home.

We see him departing, returning, restored. Sin takes him from home, by repentance he returns home, and he finds salvation at home. He is a sinner, a penitent, and a saint; and by his case Christ illustrates sin, repentance, and grace.

**I. From Home.**—As nothing is said about her, I believe that his mother was dead. Probably he was like some motherless youths among us, who, at the age of twenty-one, inherit their mother's fortune, and become independent of their father. Thus he

could say, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me'. Anyhow he was left to the freedom of his own will; his father could not or would not hamper him. In him behold yourself. Man is the prodigal, the younger child in God's family. We are the children of Adam the prodigal, and like father like family. We are free, for God who embraces the returning does not constrain the departing prodigal. We are all wanderers from 'God who is our home'. The prodigal is thus a life-size picture of every sinner. In him we see sin in its origin, growth, and end. Fix your eye on him, and I shall read off some of the marks of sin. Sin is a restless desire for what we cannot have at home, hatred of law and restraints, the ceasing to have a son's heart towards God, the revolting against God. Sin is impatience, self-will, self-seeking. Sin is the most monstrous thing under heaven. How shockingly the prodigal treated the best of fathers! He shows that vice has its progress as well as virtue. Sin is riot and waste. He wasted his substance; that means, his being, his manhood, his proper self. Prodigal, it is said, means a self-waster. Sin is want, and woe, and slavery; it is self-wounding and ruin. He spent all, he was in a mighty famine, 'he began to be in want'. He began: worse was coming, for he was nearing the edge of an abyss. He was in want, it does not say of what, for he was just in want of everything. To feed swine was the deepest degradation to which a rich young Jew could come. 'He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.' These were the pods of the carob-tree, which are still used for pig-food in Cyprus. He tried to satisfy himself with swine-food, but failed. He cannot fall lower without falling into hell. Sin is meanness and brutishness, for the swine-herd was more swinish than the swine which did nothing contrary to their nature. Sin is madness. He spent all for nothing, nay for much—for rags and shame and every misery.

**II. Homewards, or the Way Home.**—We shall join ourselves to him sitting there in rags by the swine-troughs, his face buried in his hands. We shall thus see the human side of conversion. In his way home I notice four stages or milestones; and—

1. *Thought.*—And when he came to himself, he said, How many, etc. (ver. 17). He faces the facts around him, searches for their meaning, compares what he is with what he might have been, contrasts his starvation with the plenty of his father's servants. Like a drunken sailor, sobered by shipwreck, ruin staring him in the face, he comes to his senses. He is disgusted with his miseries and awakened by his sins. He converses with himself and puts things together; that is, he reasons and understands. He now sees that he has been mad. His coming to himself is the first step in his coming to God.

2. *Resolution.*—'I will arise' (ver. 18), or rather, I am determined to arise. His was no confused resolution, for it took in all he had to do and what he would say to his father. The thought of returning

had, I dare say, often entered his mind before, but it had died almost as soon as born. Now he is thoroughly roused, and his mind is made up. Thinking is worth little unless it pass over into resolving. The first stage in the way Godwards joins on to the second. It does you good to resolve, and, like the prodigal, to put your resolution into words. For the way to heaven as well as the way to hell is paved with good intentions. Men usually reach heaven along a road, every footstep of which they have paved with holy resolutions. The New Year is one of the best times for thinking about life and resolving. The best New Year's vow is, 'I will arise, and go to my Father'.

3. *Action.*—'And he arose' (ver. 20). A moment ago he was sitting among the swine, utterly crushed. As the past and possible future rush into his mind he forms his resolution, and at once feels as if he were a new man, and had gotten a new body. The resolution enters his mind like a flash from heaven; and like a shock of electricity passes into his wasted frame. It runs as a quick creative impulse along his nerves, his feet and ankle-bones receive strength, and his whole body thrills with new energy. History tells us that great soldiers before their great battles, as Cæsar at the Rubicon, and Lord Clive at Plassey, looked like men inspired the moment they resolved on their line of action. An earnest resolution, and the honest effort to carry it through, will fetch you new strength. The prodigal had formed the great resolve in the greatest of all battles. And no sooner resolved than done—he is off for home. He is quick to turn his thought into purpose, and his purpose into an accomplished fact. He had often repented before in a way, and then repented of his repentance; but now he must burn his boats and break down all the bridges behind him, and make return to the swine-troughs impossible.

When I wish to explain repentance, I often quote the prodigal. In him you see what perfect repentance is. True repentance is repentance in action; it moves the whole man homewards, Christwards.

**III. At Home.**—The father was on the outlook for his boy, and his love-quickened eye saw him 'when he was yet a great way off'. Though the prodigal had not been long away—he was a 'fast' youth—his father's dogs did not know him when near at hand, I believe, but barked fiercely at the suspicious ragged stranger. 'You are a fine sight!' 'You see what you have brought upon yourself!' 'You left a prince and return a beggar!' 'You come home only when the world has cast you out of doors!' No such stinging words crossed the father's lips; but he 'had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him'; he rained kisses on him, it means as a mother in a moment of fondness, rains kisses on her child.

We wish each other a happy New Year, but earth has no greater happiness than this. The happiest find their happiness where the prodigal found his—at home with the Father.—JAMES WELLS, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 171.

## THE BLIND MAN CURED

'Lord, that I may receive my sight!'—LUKE XVIII. 41.

It is impossible for people who are blessed with the use of their eyes to form an idea how dreadful a calamity it would be to become blind. Shut your eyes for a few moments, and while the light of day is excluded, and all familiar and pleasant objects have faded from your view, think of remaining in that dreary state for weeks, and months, and years; aye, for your whole life. Then you will be prepared, in a very small degree, to thank the good Lord for His mercy towards you, in allowing you to see the faces of those whom you love, as well as to hear them speak.

Much as blind people lose by not having the use of their eyes, they have often made themselves not only useful but even distinguished. Professor Sanderson of Cambridge, England, lost his sight when only a year old, but became a great mathematician.

Dr. Blackwood was master of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, and a poet of no mean degree.

Dr. Henry Moyes was skilled in geometry, optics, and astronomy, and he could judge very accurately of the size of any room in which he happened to be by the effects of his voice.

John Metcalf, an Englishman, was employed first as a waggoner, and afterwards became a surveyor of highways. By the help of a long staff he would traverse the most difficult mountain roads, and was able to do more than many men accomplish with their eyes open. William Metcalf laid out roads and built bridges.

Euler, the mathematician, was blind. John Gough, who was an accurate botanist and zoologist, was also blind. Lord Cranbourne, blind from his childhood, published a history of France for the young.

Huber, who has written such an interesting book about bees, was blind. Homer was blind. The sam: was true of Ossian and Milton. Zisca, the famous Bohemian general, performed great acts of valour after the loss of his sight.

The Rev. J. Crosse, vicar of Bradford, England, was blind, but as he knew the Church service by heart, he was able to conduct public worship with impressiveness and solemnity, only requiring the help of another person to read the lessons for him.

If you have an opportunity, I would advise you to read William Wirt's beautiful account of 'The Blind Preacher,' in his *Letters of a British Spy*.

Those who have enjoyed the use of their eyes for years, and then been afflicted with blindness, suffer much more than such as have been blind from their birth.

Blindness is much more common in far-off Eastern countries than in Europe or America. In the New Testament the blind are often mentioned; and the law of Moses taught the duty of showing kindness to this unfortunate portion of the human family.

All that I have been telling you about blind people

will help you to enter into the spirit of what is to follow.

In the days when this evil world was blessed by the bodily presence of the Lord Jesus, a person travelling along the high-road east from Bethany, after passing through a dreary wilderness for several hours, would have suddenly come in sight of a beautiful city crowning a hill-top, surrounded by gardens, and shaded by graceful palm-trees. This was Jericho, sometimes called the 'City of Palm-trees'. Here King Herod had built a palace for himself that he might enjoy the bracing mountain air and the pure water.

Like all other fine towns Jericho had many poor, unfortunate people in it; and it is in one of this class that we are especially interested now. In an obscure, dilapidated dwelling lived blind Bartimeus—poor, wretched, hopeless; time had ploughed its deep wrinkles on his care-worn face, and none who saw him could help feeling pity for his state.

Our blessed Lord had been going about doing good, from place to place, working wonderful cures, but as yet He does not seem to have visited Jericho. Rumours of His marvellous miracles spread far and wide, and no doubt poor blind Bartimeus had often wished that the great Prophet of Nazareth, in some of His journeys, might bestow a blessing on him; but hope deferred, and often disappointed, had made his heart sick. Day after day some member of his family, or a sympathising friend, led him forth into the city, and he sat down in the market-place, or in a crowded street, to beg. Everybody knew him; some pitied and helped him, while others passed by him again and again, giving no heed to his pathetic tale of woe.

Our Saviour was on his last journey to Jerusalem, and had spent the Sabbath at Jericho. On leaving the city a great company followed Him, and He passed near the place where blind Bartimeus sat.

The loss of one of our faculties is apt to strengthen those that remain, and although the beggar could not see, his sense of hearing told him that the tramp of many feet and the hum of voices denoted the occurrence of something unusual. His appeals for alms were forgotten, while curiosity prompted him to ask what all this meant.

A thrill of delight shot through him when the answer was returned, 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'

Presently those nearest to the Saviour heard a piteous cry, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Many in the crowd were provoked that the blind man should thus address the Saviour by one of the names belonging to the promised Messiah, and with angry and threatening words they did their best to silence him. The more, however, that they tried to make him hold his peace, the more importunately he cried, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Soon the hard-hearted men who crowded about Bartimeus were pushed aside, and a friendly voice



was heard to say, 'Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee!'

Yes, there the blessed Saviour stands, waiting for the blind man to be brought to Him. He is so anxious to go to the great Prophet that he casts off the loose garment that covered his shoulders, and urges those who are leading him to make more haste.

The Lord Jesus looked upon the poor blind man with tender, pitying eyes, and asked, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?'

'Lord, that I may receive my sight!' was his prompt and touching answer.

Then He, who in the beginning had created all things, and who said, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' gave a fresh proof of His almighty power. 'Receive thy sight,' He said to the blind man, 'thy faith hath saved thee!'

In a moment the eyes of Bartimeus were opened, and he looked out upon the beauties of the earth and sky, and the faces of his fellow-men, and most of all upon the benignant countenance of that adorable Saviour who had extended such mercy to him.

A loud burst of wonder and thanksgiving was heard on every side, as Jesus moved onward in the way; and Bartimeus followed after Him with heart too full for utterance.

What a comfort it should be to us to remember that our Divine Master is just as He was then—kind, compassionate, able and willing to help.—JOHN N. NORRIS, *Milk and Honey*, p. 124.

### 'SHOW ME A PENNY'

LUKE XX. 24.

JESUS took every opportunity to teach plain, practical, and important truths. And every familiar object served as a text for His instructive discourses. Jesus said to His enemies, 'Show Me a penny,' and when they brought it to Him, He preached a practical sermon from it. If we take a new penny and look at it carefully, we shall see a number of suggestive lessons upon it. There are—The Image of the Sovereign, Emblems of Life, and Marks of Service.

1. **Image of Sovereign.**—An emblem of Divine life (2 Cor. iii. 18).

2. **Inscription.**—(*Gra. Britt. Regina*). A mark of spiritual life (Eph. i. 8).

3. **Sailing Ship.**—A picture of business life (Ps. civ. 26).

4. **Lighthouse.**—An illustration of philanthropic life (Matt. v. 16).

5. **Britannia.**—A figure of national life (Acts xvii. 26).

6. **Date of Penny.**—A token of registered life (Ps. lxxxvii. 6).

7. **Value of Penny.**—A symbol of valued life (Matt. vi. 28, 26).

I find the lighthouse and ship are left off the last-made new pennies.

Men make their goods, and then put their trademark upon the outside. The Lord saves and recreates His people and marks them inside.

The late Earl Cairns, when he was ten years old, heard a Belfast minister say in his sermon, 'God claims you'. Those words stuck to the boy, and kept echoing in his soul, 'God claims you'. He said to himself, 'And He has a good right to claim me. He made me and He cares for me; and He has sent His son to die for me.' And he resolved to yield himself to God at once. His motto to the end was 'God claims me'.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 86.

### 'IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME'

LUKE XXII. 19.

IN England there are many kind people who gather poor children who have no home, no father or mother from the streets, and who take them to Canada to homes and work and prosperity.

A company of such children had arrived in America, and were just preparing to go into a train to be taken to the far West of Canada, where homes and good prospects were awaiting them.

They were all proud and glad—proud, for they had been decked out in new clothing, and glad because of the grand journey they had before them. But one boy was seen to be away from the rest busy working at the lining of his old jacket. He was cutting at it with a knife.

'What are you doing?' the leader of the party asked.

'I am cutting out this lining, sir, to take it with me.'

'And why do you wish to take that old rag with you?'

'Old rag, sir?' exclaimed the boy, and then he added, very solemnly, 'It was part of a dress my mother wore. She cut up her old dress to line my jacket with. This,' he said, taking the material into his hand, 'was my dead mother's.'

A little bit of an old gown! That was all. Worth nothing in money. But to this poor orphan and exile it was a reminder of a mother's love. The leader of the party understood, and he honoured the boy, so the little rag was carefully folded up and placed in the boy's bosom under his new waistcoat to remember his mother by.

Now that boy's feeling was very tender and very beautiful. It was a great joy to the poor mother when she was cutting up her old dress to think that it would help to keep her boy warm. How much more deep and solemn must have been that joy if she could have foreseen that it was to go with him over the sea to the New World to keep his heart warm, to be worn in his bosom in his new life in Canada, when she was no more, and in kindly remembrance of her.

We like to be remembered. A little flower there is whose name speaks the language of all human hearts, 'Forget-me-not'. However different men, women, and boys may be, they all like to be remembered. And in that longing of all of us may understand Jesus. He too longed to be remembered. When He was going

away from earth, He said to His disciples, 'I should like to be remembered by you, and all who live after you'. And He appointed a little meal, a supper as it is called, the Lord's Supper, the eating of bread and drinking of wine, to be remembered by. 'This will keep Me in remembrance,' He said. 'As often as you do this, remember Me.'

And what reason have we all to remember Him? He left heaven for us. He lived for us His life of toil and love and sorrow. He died for us and for our sins. He rose again and went away to heaven to live, and pray, and labour for us.

That boy's mother loved her son; far more did Jesus love us. That boy would not forget his mother and her love; far more should we resolve that we will not forget Jesus. It was a little work in which he saw his mother's love; how great is the work in which we see Jesus' love!

It was right and noble of that boy to keep that dear heart in remembrance, and what is right and noble is always the joyful, the strengthening, and blessed thing to do; how much more right, more noble, is it to keep the heart of Jesus in remembrance, and how much more does doing so give joy, and strength, and blessedness!

It was not for His sake alone, but for our sakes that Jesus said, 'Remember Me'.

It is hundreds of years now since Jesus gave out this wish of His, but by thousands He has been kept in memory ever since. In sorrow and joy the memory of Him has been strength and gladness at home and abroad. His memory is the life and light of loving hearts.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 83.

### 'ICH DIEN'

'I am among you as he that serveth.'—LUKE XXII. 27.

'Whom I serve.'—ROMANS I. 9. (See also 2 TIM I. 3.)

THE first motto of which we naturally think is that of the Prince of Wales. You know the crest by sight. It consists of three ostrich feathers encircled by a coronet, and tied together by a ribbon, bearing the motto, 'Ich Dien' ('I serve'). Probably you know the history of that motto. It was adopted by the blind King of Bohemia. When he put on the armour for the great battle of Crécy, he went forth bearing high his feathered crest, and on it written 'Ich Dien'. But when the battle was over the Black Prince had taken his motto and his crest, and had appropriated them for himself and for his successors. Five hundred years have passed away since then. The crest has been handed down by each Prince of Wales to his successor, and now the crest and motto belong to the present heir to the throne. Thus the Prince of Wales' crest and motto are borrowed—to use the very gentlest term. They were the Bohemian King's, before our Prince or any of his predecessors possessed them. But even the King of Bohemia only borrowed the motto from greater ones than himself. Paul the Apostle says, 'For God is my witness, *whom I serve*' (Rom. i. 9); and elsewhere

he exclaims: 'I thank God, *whom I serve*' (2 Tim. i. 3). But I go farther back than Paul, and remind you that a greater than even he used similar words with regard to Himself, and practically accepted them as His motto: 'I am among you *as he that serveth*' (Luke xxii. 27).

I. 'I serve' was pre-eminently the motto of Christ, and His whole life was in accordance with it. The disciples wrangled one with another—and they had done so on the sacred and solemn occasion of the supper—as to which of them should be counted the greatest. While they were striving, the Lord girded Himself with a towel and began to wash their feet. He would thus teach them the one lesson which is so difficult for us to learn, namely, that he who serves most, or is most useful, is the greatest. It is all very well to be ornamental. A figure-head is an ornament to a ship; but the man who keeps the look-out, who stands at the wheel and steers the ship, or who adjusts the sails on board, is very much superior to the figure-head. In life there are some men who are figure-heads. They do nothing. But they are not those whom we respect while they live, or whose memories we revere when they are no more with us. We honour those who have done most in the service of God, and in the interests of mankind.

II. 'Deserve' is connected with the word 'serve'. Thus desert or merit is inseparably connected with service. The man who deserves most is the man who served most worthily.

But, above all, we learn from the Master that the greatest is servant of all, and that He, their Lord and Master, was among the disciples as he that serveth. We learn, too, from the Apostle Paul what pride he took in the fact that he had been called to be a 'servant of Jesus Christ'. Now, if you could only carry this conviction into life what a blessing it would be! How glad I should be to know that not a single boy or girl here this morning will be an idler in life, but that each will be useful in his or her day.

But it is not only important that we should be useful; we should also learn that it is very important to decide *whom* we shall serve. Here the Apostle Paul speaks very clearly: 'I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience'. The first thing he tells us is that he served *God*. He had chosen the highest service and the best Master. He next tells us that he has served God *from his forefathers*. It is indeed a great privilege to be taught by our parents to serve God—taught by their example as well as by their words. You know that we learn by imitation much more than even by precept or any amount of talking. If we see that our parents serve God, what a help it is to us in serving God! Therefore, when anyone can say with Paul that he has served God from his forefathers, he is indeed greatly privileged. But even when denied that privilege we have the opportunity of making a good beginning ourselves.

III. Now the service our Lord requires is a very thorough one. 'With a pure conscience,' says Paul

in one passage, and in another, 'Whom I serve with my spirit'. This service must take us up altogether. A service that is begrudged is no service at all, in the higher sense. In the times when a servant begrudged his labour, and could only be urged on by the lash, the servant was called a 'serf'—and a serf means a slave. In those instances, too, the spirit of the master was tyrannical. The noblest service is that service which is asked of us in love, and rendered by us in a loving spirit. If we render a service simply because we are forced to do it, we are as great serfs to-day as any who have ever lived. But if we serve God because we love Him and His service, then His service becomes a delight to us.

The next thing is that we must *not divide* our services—'Ye cannot serve God and mammon'. The Saviour asks of you your undivided service. There are services which may not be purely religious, but, nevertheless, Christ accepts them as rendered unto Him. In obeying your parents, or your masters in any calling in life, or in serving your Queen and nation, you may serve Him.

But there is a service higher than all this, and that is the direct service we owe to Jesus Christ. We call this in which we are now engaged 'a service'. It is a Divine service. But there is also a service over and above this. We here receive God's blessing, and learn more of His truth and of our duty, so that when we go out to the world we may remember what we have heard in the sanctuary, and not forget to render the service of obedient hearts.—DAVID DAVIES, *Talks to Men, Women, and Children* (5th Series), p. 198.

#### A GENTLE MASTER AND HIS SCHOLAR

LUKE XXII. 57-62.

I. I INTEND to tell you to-day of a Master who was denied by a scholar He loved, and yet was so gentle that He continued to him His love.

The scholar was Peter; the Master was Christ.

It was the last evening of our Lord's earthly life. It was the evening on which He girt a towel about Him, and washed the feet of His disciples, the very evening also on which one of these disciples was to sell Him for thirty pieces of silver.

The Lord and the disciples were sitting in an upper room in Jerusalem. They had come to this room to eat the Feast of the Passover. And that itself was a solemn thing to do; for there was prayer, and there was chanting of psalms, and there was the going back of their thoughts to the awful night long before in which the firstborn of Egypt were slain, when the angel of death passed over the houses of the children of Israel.

But on this particular evening there were thoughts in the minds of all who were in that upper room which filled them with concern and sorrow. It was the last passover they were to eat together. Jesus began to tell them of His going away, and of the death He had to die. Very soon the disciples He had watched over and prayed for would be as sheep without a shepherd. Very soon the Master they had

learned so much from would be taken from them by enemies, and by wicked hands put to death. The heart of the Saviour was very sad. One of His own disciples, one who had eaten the Passover with Him, was gone forth to betray Him. He had seen the traitor rising from the table and stealing out in the darkness to do his evil deed. The rest of the disciples would forsake Him too.

'Yes,' He said, putting His sad thoughts into words, 'ye shall all be offended because of Me, this night.'

But as soon as these sorrowful words were spoken, Peter cried out that such a thing could never happen. One at least of his dear Lord's disciples would never do a thing so base. 'Though all the others should be offended because of Thee,' he said, 'yet will I never be offended.'

I think I see the Lord turning to the disciple who spoke in this brave way. I am sure it was with a heart filled with pity He said to him, 'O Peter! this very night, before the cock crow twice, thyself shalt deny Me thrice.'

Peter could not bear to think that he should do a thing so bad. He hated the very thought of it. And he cried out, and I fancy with tears in his eyes, 'Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. I am ready to go with Thee both unto prison and death.'

And he really thought he was ready to do all he had said. For he loved his Master with his whole heart, and meant to be brave and true, and stand by Him to the end.

In a little while the meeting in the upper room came to an end. And they left the upper room and went to a place called the Garden of Olives. And into that garden Jesus went to pray to His Father for strength. He often went there to pray. And there Judas knew he should find Him. And to this place he brought a band of rude men with swords and staves to seize Him and take Him to the priests.

It was a very quiet and lonesome place. And it looked more lonesome because it was night, and was filled with trees that looked all black at night. But there was no quietness in it after Judas came. The people he brought with him were rude and noisy, and came round about the Lord to lay hold of Him. And as they brought lights with them, and the lights went moving to and fro among the trees, anyone standing near could see what they had come to do. Peter understood in a moment what they had come to do. He saw the traitor also, and saw him giving a false kiss to the Lord. And he heard the rude cries and he saw the fierce looks of the traitor's band. And perhaps he saw some one laying hands on Jesus to seize Him. Whatever took place Peter was filled with anger. His brave soul flamed out in anger. Were rude hands like these to be laid on the Lord he loved so well? It must not be. He would defend his Master. He would show them that one at least was not that night to forsake Him. And thinking these thoughts and stirred by that anger,



he suddenly drew forth a sword and began to strike with it, and struck one of the servants of the high priest on the ear.

If it had been by swords the Lord was to be served that night, Peter might not have failed. But the Lord blamed him for using a sword. And then came into Peter's heart the beginning of fear, and with that an evil thought about himself. He said to himself, 'This Judas band have lights, and they must have seen me as I struck with the sword'. When the band left the garden and hurried into the city, the lights flashing on everything as they went, Peter felt that they were flashing back on him. 'If I follow I shall be found out,' he thought. But how could he refuse to follow, when he had said, 'I will go with Thee both into prison and death'? He followed, but it was with halting steps. Up through the silent streets raged the noisy band, as peaceful citizens in their homes were lying down to rest. Up through the very streets in which, but the other day, Jesus was welcomed as a king, He was now dragged as a prisoner. On from one place to another they dragged Him, till they came where His worst enemies were waiting, all athirst for His blood. It was the palace of Caiaphas the high priest to which they brought the Lord. Peter still followed, but at a distance, and hiding in the shadows behind.

The palace was built like a square of houses—an open court in the centre, the rooms all round, and an entrance-hall at one side of the square. A maid was waiting at the hall door to let them in. She held her lamp against every face as it passed. Now was Peter's first trial. Now was Peter to learn how much easier it is to strike with a sword in a dark place than to speak a brave word in the light. He shrank back. That lamp would discover him. The others would see the man who had struck with the sword. But then he looked wistfully as his dear Master was led in, and across the open court and into the judgment-hall out of his sight. Then, still looking through the gateway, he saw the men who had taken Jesus into the judgment-hall come out into the court and kindle a fire. The night was cold, the fire was tempting. He would be nearer his Lord if he were inside. At last he ventured in. And it was then, as the maid held her light to his face, and saw his troubled look, he uttered his first denial. 'Thou?' she said. 'Thou art a follower of that man?' Alas for Peter! His fear for himself came over him like a great wave of the sea, and he said, 'Woman, I know Him not'. After a while, as he stood near the fire, another said, 'Art not thou one of this man's people?' And a second time, with angry voice, Peter denied that he was.

All this time he could see the judgment-hall and the crowd of evil men who were bearing false witness against his Lord. And he could see, standing bound before them, the form of the Lord Himself. But at last the long night was coming to an end. The night clouds were beginning to break. And the grey streaks of morning were coming faintly into the

sky. It was then that some word which Peter spoke told the people standing about that he was from Galilee. They said to him, 'Your very speech tells what you are. You are a follower of the Galilean there.' A third time Peter denied that he knew Him whom they called the Galilean, and this time he denied with oaths and curses. But even as he was speaking he saw a movement in the judgment-hall. And his Lord turned round and looked at him. Then sank Peter's heart within him. His Lord had warned him that he should deny Him three times before the cock crew, and at that very moment the cock began to crow. The Lord's look pierced him like a sword. He saw his cowardice, his ingratitude, his sin. And rushing out to be alone, he sobbed and cried as if his heart would break.

It was a great sin which he had sinned. He had been ashamed of Christ. It was a great fall from a good and blessed state. He had been a lover of Jesus. He was the first to see and say that Jesus was the Saviour of the world. And now, by his three denials, the fair form of his love and life was marred to the very heart.

II. That is the first half of the story of the scholar who denied his Master. Listen now to the other half, to the story of the gentleness of the Master who still kept him in His love.

I will begin this half by saying that there are two beautiful things in every gentle heart. Those two things are honour and mercy.

To be brave for goodness, to be true to friends who are good, not to be ashamed to say, 'I am on their side,' to be a hater of meanness and untruth, and to be all this, even if, in being it, one should have to suffer scorn or beating—that is honour.

To pity friends who through fear have not been brave or true, to forgive them for their want of braveness and take them back into your love, even when it is the goodness in your own life they have not been true to—that is mercy.

The story of Peter's denial of his Master is the story of one who failed in honour; the story of the Master's love to him is the story of One who did not fail in mercy.

This Master is very gentle. What is said in the old Psalm may be said of Jesus. 'Such pity as a father hath to his children' the Lord had to Peter. He knew how weak he was. He remembered that although Peter was a man in years, he was only a child in the power to be honourable and true. And therefore He was not angry with him. He did not say, 'I will have nothing more to do with this scholar'. He said, 'I will have compassion upon him, and remember his evil deed no more'.

And that is the first thing to understand both about Peter and about the gentleness of Christ.

Peter was as yet very weak. And he did not know how weak he was. If he had known his weakness, he would not have said, 'Though all others forsake Thee, yet will not I'. That is a lesson we have all to learn. And many who come to be very strong for

goodness and truth in their old age are as weak as Peter in their youth. About two hundred years ago there lived in France a very holy lady, who for her holiness and goodness was by bad people put in prison. Her name was Madam Guyon. When this lady was a young girl at school she was very religious, and had, even then, a great love for God. But one day she said to the other girls of the school that she loved God so well that she could die for Him. And the other girls saw, or thought they saw, that this was only a boast, and that it sprang from pride. So they agreed to put her to a very cruel test. They went to her and said that a message had come from God commanding her to give up her life for Him. And then they led her into a room, on which they had spread a great white sheet to receive her blood. And they ordered her to kneel in the centre of it that she might be put to death. Then her heart failed her just as Peter's did. Then she found out how weak and proud-hearted she had been. And she cried out that she could not die until her father gave his consent. But it was the beginning of strength to this pious girl to have found out her weakness and her pride of heart. And it was the beginning of strength to Peter to find out how weak and full of the fear of death he was. And the gentleness of the Master was shown in this, that He put the blame of the denial and the untruth on his weakness, and did not say, 'He has a bad and wicked heart'.

Another beautiful thing in the gentleness of the Master was that although Peter failed to be true to Him, He did not fail to be true to Peter. When the Lord takes anyone into His love, He does not easily let him go. He had taken Peter into His love. And having begun to love him, He loved him unto the end. He showed that by the look which He gave Him when the cock crew. The Lord had been thinking of Peter and praying for him even when evil men were speaking and working evil against Himself at the judgment-seat. And when the poor, weak disciple had lost all his braveness through the fear which had come upon him, and denied his Master the third time, and this time with oaths and curses, the Master turned and gave him this look. It was a look of sorrow, not of anger. If the look could have been changed into words, it would have said, 'O Peter! O my poor, weak disciple! did I not forewarn thee of this?' A very tender look it would be, like the look of a mother who finds her child in a serious fault: a look with vexation in it, but also with healing and help in it. That look recalled Peter to himself. It made him see two things at the same moment—both how truly Jesus loved him and how little he deserved His love. That look made him ashamed of his want of honour and truth. It opened the fountain of tears. It led him to repent of the base words he had spoken. And the gentle Master intended that it should help His disciple in this very way.

And in yet another way the Master showed that He was true to His disciple. Peter was one of the

first He thought about after He rose from the grave. So loving, so gentle was He, so truly did He wish this disciple to know that he was forgiven, that when He was sending a message to the disciples about His resurrection, He mentioned Peter, and only Peter, by name. 'Go your way,' He said to the women who came to the grave with sweet spices and found Him risen—'go your way, tell the disciples *and Peter* that Jesus goeth before you into Galilee.'

But more gentle still the Master not only forgave His disciple, but healed him of the evil in his heart. He did not make light of the evil which His disciple had done. He laid bare that evil, so that Peter could not but see it. He laid bare the very thoughts and feelings of Peter's own heart that he might learn how he had been led into his evil deed. He showed him the pride, the self-esteem, the over-confidence in himself, which had led Peter to say, 'Though all be offended with Thee, yet will not I'.

But He did not stop there. Jesus knew what Peter was yet ignorant of, that beneath the pride of heart lay wells of love and faith and honour which the pride of his heart kept from flowing out.

And on a bright morning by the Sea of Galilee the hour came when the gentle Saviour was to bring these to light.

For Peter it was the hour of sorrow for his sin. The thoughts of his warm and loving heart were dark and heavy with the remembrance of his sin. Often, often by night and by day he had said to himself, 'Am I the same disciple who made the proud boast, and yet so basely fell? Am I the man who denied my Lord with oaths and curses, and am yet suffered the company of the disciples?' A great cloud of shame rested on his soul. He must have shrunk from the very thought of ever meeting his Lord again. But even while this thought was troubling him, the Master he had offended appeared, as in the earlier years, on the shores of the lake.

Three times the gentle Saviour put the question to His disciple, '*Lovest thou Me?*' Three times He gave the disciple who had denied Him thrice an opportunity of saying that he loved Him. At last Peter, in an anguish of humility and love, cried out, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee'.

It is not boasting now. The day of boasting of his own faithfulness is over. He has found out how weak, how passionate, how rash he has been. He knows that so long as he is on the earth there will be outbreaks, and fallings away, and turnings from the right path. But his gentle Master has taught him also to know that beneath all his weakness and sinfulness there is a living stream of love to Christ, which if he follow will lead him right.

The gentle Saviour in the presence of all the other disciples lifted the fallen Peter into his old place of honour. He put a new heart in him and a right spirit to make him strong and bold to speak for God and for righteousness. And He put him in charge, as a minister of the Gospel, of His flock. 'Feed My

lambs and My sheep,' He said to him. And Peter became brave and true, and one of the most faithful among the Apostles. It was Peter who preached the first sermon on Christ in Jerusalem, and told its rulers that by wicked hands they had slain their Lord. It was he who told the same rulers, when they commanded him not to preach in Christ's name, that it was right to obey God rather than men. And it was he who first saw that the Gospel was not to Jews only, but to the whole world, and who himself went among the Gentiles and told them of Christ's love. A brave, true, kind hearted man; a brave, true servant of God, who was made both brave and true by the gentleness of Christ.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 267.

## A FLOWER OF CALVARY

LUKE XXIII.

IN some Italian pictures of the Crucifixion, the artists have drawn a little flower growing at the foot of the cross, which they called the Alleluia flower, as our forefathers also did. It has many names, but it is most generally called wood-sorrel to-day in England. Doubtless you know its cloverlike leaves which fold up at night, or before rain, and its pearly white flowers, faintly streaked with purple. The old fancy for putting it into pictures of the Crucifixion of our Lord seems to have come from a legend that the purple streaks were caused by the falling of some drops of the Saviour's blood upon the flower. Now, we may not believe that the legend is true, and yet we may see that the painters did well to give the flower a place at the foot of the cross. The truth about the streaks on the pearly bells of the wood-sorrel is more wonderful than the ancient fancy, for such marks are now known to be, in many cases at least, what botanists call 'honey guides'—that is, they are meant to point the insects which visit the flower to the place where the honey is stored, which they come to seek. It fills me with amazement that the Eternal Wisdom should, if I may say so, take the trouble to paint streaks on a little flower in order to show insects which live but a few days, or hours even, the way to the sweet food which is to nourish their little life. Does God take care that the tiny creatures should not miss their meat, or waste their short time in vainly wandering to find it? How much more care will He not take that His *children* should have what is good for them?

There are some other quaint old fancies about trees and flowers connected with the sufferings of our Saviour, which you may like to know. One is about the aspen, or trembling poplar. You have noticed, no doubt, that the foliage of the aspen often quivers and rustles on a calm summer day, when the leaves of other trees are still: the slightest breath of wind sets the aspen leaves trembling. And a very old story is told to account for the almost perpetual shaking of the foliage—how when the men who had to make the cross went to a wood to choose a tree, they fixed upon an aspen for their purpose, and ever since all aspen

trees have trembled with the remembrance that one of them was used for the torture and death of our Lord. I suppose it was some poet's fancy which invented the tale, and it may have helped a little by the fact that aspen wood is not so apt to split, when a nail is driven into it, as are some other kinds of wood. Of course it is no more than a fancy, but it may serve to remind you, when you see it trembling in the breeze, of Him who died upon the cross.

In boggy places in the Highlands of Scotland there grows a tiny tree, not more than two or three feet high, the dwarf birch, and if you were to talk to a Highlander about the queer little tree, he would probably tell you that when the soldiers scourged Jesus they took branches of this tree, which then grew tall like other birches, but from that time forward it has been condemned to be a dwarf among its kind.

In other countries the folk believe that the soldiers used willow boughs to smite the Lord, and that the weeping willow has ever since drooped its branches in shame and sorrow that one of its kind tore the Saviour's flesh.

Better than these rather dark and sad fancies about aspen, birch, and willow, I like one, which I believe is of English growth, about the wild rose. According to this legend the briar did not bear roses until after the Crucifixion, but only poor, small flowers. But since the soldiers wove the thorny crown for the Saviour's head from the briar, it has had its beautiful, pinky blossoms, delicately sweet, in memory that it had the honour to wreath the head of Christ. It is but a fancy like the others, but a happier and a nobler fancy. How so? it may be asked. Because the trees had no choice in the matter and no guilt, being used by wicked hands without will of theirs, and so it is a finer, truer fancy that the tree which touched the sacred body should have a grace, rather than a curse thereby.

Another English fancy was that the crown of thorns was formed of hawthorn branches, and it used to be believed that a blessing came to every house into which a spray of May blossom was carried when first it flowered. For my part, I believe it too. The person who got up early enough in the sweet May morning to take a walk before the day's work began, and came home refreshed by his ramble in the fields, and bringing thankful thoughts of the Saviour's love as well as a handful of fragrant bloom, *must* have brought a blessing into the house. He would surely be all the more cheerful, and patient, and kind, for his walk and his thoughts, and one such person in a house helps to make others like himself.

Certainly it is wiser to try and find out the real causes of things than to make pretty fancies to account for them, since the facts of Nature are always more wonderful than the fancies of men, and you may, if you please, find out the true meaning of the shivering of aspen leaves, of the bending of willow branches, of the dwarfiness of the mountain birch, and so on, but it was wise in our forefathers to think often of our Saviour's Cross and Passion, and especi-



ally wise to think of them out in the free air, and among the green things of the earth.—JOHN A. HAMILTON, *The Wonderful River*, p. 259.

### THE BEAUTY OF WINGS

(Preached at Christmas)

'And their eyes were open, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.'—LUKE XXIV. 31.

Of how many things in nature is this true, that you know only their full beauty and worth when they are about to leave you? The day is loveliest at its setting, and the summer at its fading, and the plant in its flowering, which is just its dying. We are always looking back upon our past and surrounding it with a halo of brightness and happiness which the present does not possess. It is the law of our nature that a thing must be taken from us, or cease to be, before we find out its true value. The present blessing that is beside our path, which we fail to appreciate, must open its dull wing-cases and flee away ere we realise how much we have lost by its withdrawal. Every nation finds its golden age in its early history, and surrounds it with the atmosphere of poetry; and all men and women find their Eden, on which they look back with the tenderest yearnings, in the years of their youth.

I. The incident of the text illustrates and consecrates this natural human sentiment. While the two disciples walked with Jesus along the Emmaus road, they were interested in His conversation, and their hearts burned within them at the glowing words that fell from His lips; but their eyes were holden, and they failed to recognise His true character. It was only when He was about to vanish out of their sight that their eyes were opened, and they knew that it was the Lord Himself who had been with them. And is not the lesson which that incident at Emmaus teaches one that you are learning all through life? Your best blessings are not recognised by you till they have vanished; your common privileges have little value to you till you are deprived of them. Your home inspires no special gratitude till you are cast homeless upon the world. Your friends, the companions of your life, the dear sharers of your everyday experiences, how little do you prize the tenderness of their love or the beauty of their character, until that quiet, unceasing ministry of goodness has ceased for ever! Barrie says in his interesting Life of his mother, 'Everything that I could do for her I have done since I was a boy. I look back through the years, and I cannot see the smallest thing left undone.' That surely must be a most uncommon experience. I did not think that any human being could possibly say that of his dead. Happy son to feel in that way towards the mother that has vanished out of his sight! For most of us death is not only a revealer but an accuser!

II. Blessed be God, it is not a Saviour vanishing from your view while your eyes are opened for the first time to know what He is, that is revealed to you at Christmas time. He appeared to the disciples

at the end of His earthly life, when His work was finished and He was about to depart to the home from whence He came. But He appears to you at Christmas time as a little child born anew into the world. You are not like Cleopas and his companion at Emmaus, in the twilight shadows, asking Jesus to abide with you, for the day is far spent; but like the shepherds and the wise men at Bethlehem, gazing with reverence at the wonderful spectacle of the Word made flesh, and assuming the form and nature of a new-born babe, with the fresh, fair, morning light all around. The old and the new come together—the close of the year and the birth of your Saviour. The close of the year tells you that all its bright seasons have vanished out of your sight, and produces the sorrow and repentance connected with such loss. The birth of Jesus tells you that all old things may be made new, and so fills your heart with fresh hope and resolution. And just as the vanishing of Jesus when His work here was done revealed His true character to the disciples, so may the appearing of Jesus to you, as a little child, take your heart captive by the beauty of His lowliness, subdue your pride, conquer your selfishness, teach you true humility, and put you in the way of acquiring that childlike spirit without which you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 306.

### GOING DOWN; OR THE LADDER TO GLORY

(For Ascensiontide)

LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

I WANT to tell you about the Ascension of Jesus Christ. Do you know what 'Ascension' means? It means 'going up'. Jesus Christ going up into heaven, that is the meaning of the word. It was last Thursday, eighteen hundred and forty-five years ago. I wonder whether you know why I say that eighteen hundred and forty-five years ago, last Thursday, Jesus Christ went away? He had been upon the earth—after he rose from the dead—forty days, and then it was ten days after He went up into heaven before He sent the Holy Ghost, as it will be next Sunday. Forty and ten make fifty; therefore that day on which the Holy Ghost came down is called 'Fifty,' or 'Pentecost,' which means 'fifty,' because it was just 'fifty days' after Jesus Christ ascended. Let us understand the matter.

I. In the morning—I am almost sure it was in the morning; it does not say so in the Bible, but the Church says so—in the morning, before twelve o'clock, you might have seen Jesus Christ with eleven of His disciples (poor Judas was dead and gone) Jesus with eleven of His disciples going out of the east—that way—the east gate of Jerusalem; He went down a very steep place, and then He crossed a little river which is called 'the brook Kedron'; and when He had crossed the little river, He went up the hill the other side—there were a great many olive-trees on that hill; and He came to the Garden of Gethsemane, and he went on till he came to a little

town 'called Bethany,' on the top of a hill. He had talked about a great many things as He walked along to Bethany; and when He came to Bethany, almost the last thing Jesus said to them was, 'You must go into all the world, you must teach everybody, and baptise everybody'. And then He said, 'If you do so, I will be with you always to the end of the world'. 'Those were the last words that we know Jesus said. And then 'He lifted up His hands' like a priest, for He was a priest, 'and He blessed them, and as He was blessing them,' with His hands lifted up, He began to rise up—His body began to rise. Yes, His own body, and there were the signs in the hands and the feet and the side that it was the same body; and so it went on rising up and up. Now the disciples must have looked on wonderingly. And as He went up a cloud came down and hid Him from their view, and then they could not see him any more. That was the way He went up.

Do you remember, in the fourteenth of Leviticus, one of the sacrifices of the Jews was this: The priest took two birds, two little birds, and he killed one, and he dipped the living bird in the blood of the dead bird, and then he let the living bird fly out into the open fields. The dead bird was Jesus on the cross; the live bird was Jesus going up into the height of glory. It was a type of Him.

So Jesus went up, and 'a cloud received Him out of their sight'.

II. What do you think was going on, on the other side? Something very grand indeed. I should think that all the angels came to meet Him. I should think there was a grand procession, and that they were all singing their hosannas to Him. Can you tell me what they said? I think it was this: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah' (Ps. xxiv. 7-10). 'The Lord of hosts!' He is 'the Lord of all the armies of earth; all the myriads of creation'. 'The Lord of hosts,' Who destroyeth all His people's foes. *He is the King of glory!*

It was very grand when a Roman general had won a great victory, and came back to Rome, and had all his prisoners tied to his chariot-wheels, and he distributed far and wide 'gifts' to those around. *So did Jesus Christ.* He is gone up to heaven to give you and me now 'the gift of the Holy Ghost'.

That is the way that Jesus Christ went up into heaven.

I like to fancy it, though we cannot see it, that Jesus going up into heaven was making a ladder for us to go up. We cannot see the steps, but He has made a ladder—better than Jacob's ladder—and we can go up now. We could not go up before; but

now He has made the ladder we can go up. I want to talk about that Ascension—our going up.

A little girl was seeing some pictures one day, and one was the picture of an angel. He had wings; and her mother talked to her about the golden streets of heaven, and the gates of pearl; and little Julia said, 'Mamma, when shall I get my wings, and fly up there?'

III. When will *you* get *your* wings and fly away? Let us think about it.

Now you know this is God's rule—*before we go up, we always come down.* If you want to go up very high, you must go down—be very humble. If I want to leap a great big height, I must put myself down, then I can spring. The way up the Hill of Ascension is through the Valley of Descent. You must go down, or you will never ascend if you do not first descend. I want to speak to you a little about that *going down.*

What should you think if I were to say to you, if you are a Christian boy or a Christian girl, 'You will never die'? Should I speak the truth? Is that true—*You will never die?* Yes, it is true. If you are God's child you will never die. You will shut your eyes to this world, to open them in that beautiful world. But you won't die. God says so. 'He that liveth and believeth in Me *shall never die*'. So you won't die. I am going to speak about what we generally call death—about dying.

A week or two ago I was in the Isle of Wight. I dare say you have been there. Did you go to Newport? If you go to the Isle of Wight you must go to Newport. I will tell you something about a very beautiful monument there.

Charles the First had a daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, who was a very pious girl. At the time when his subjects were very cruel and rebelled against him, the Princess Elizabeth was shut up a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle; and there she was treated very cruelly. One morning, when the keeper came in to see her, there was the Princess Elizabeth lying dead, and her head was resting on the Bible which she had been reading. The verse she had just been reading, where her head was, was this, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'. There was the little princess lying dead with her head on that text.

In the church at Newport there is a monument in white marble, very beautiful. It is a figure of the Princess Elizabeth, her long hair flowing down, her head lying on a Bible; all made of beautiful white marble, and inscribed thereon these words, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'.

I saw the room in Carisbrooke Castle and the spot where she died. I advise you to see both the church and the castle if you go to the Isle of Wight.

That was very beautiful. She laid her head on that beautiful text and went to heaven. Well, it was a very happy death.

You will die some day; you will be put into a coffin.

A little girl had a little baby sister who died, and the little baby sister was put into a little coffin, and the little girl said, 'Mother, baby has got a new cradle!' That was a pretty name for it.

But when the body is put into the coffin, what has become of the soul?

I will tell you about a little girl and her little brother. They went to see their aunt who had been very ill. But when they saw her she was dead! When they came home the little boy said to his sister, 'Sister, I was so surprised to see aunt. I thought when good people died they went to heaven; but aunt is not gone to heaven. We saw her body lying on the bed, dead. How was it, sister? I don't understand it.' His sister said, 'No, you do not understand it. I will explain it to you. It is the thinking part that goes to heaven. Aunt's thinking part has gone to heaven, because we think with the soul.'

When the body dies the angels carry the soul to heaven, because it was said so of Lazarus.

Did you ever see a balloon? It is a very beautiful thing to see. It is tied down with strings and ropes, and when the balloon is ready to go up the people cut the ropes and strings, and away the balloon goes up into the sky. Do you know why it goes up? Because the air inside the balloon is lighter than the air outside. If you put a cork into the water it rises because it is lighter than the water. So the balloon goes up because it is so light. And we go up because we have got a spirit inside us. We go to heaven because we have got heaven inside us. That is our ascension.

Now about the body. I want to speak a little about the body. It is a seed sown, but that is not the end of the body.

When Michelangelo the great sculptor was one day walking through the streets of Florence, he saw in a corner a large, ugly, dark piece of marble. He went up to it and he wanted it very much. He paid great attention to this ugly piece of marble. And Michelangelo said, 'There is an angel in that marble, and I want to let the angel out.' So he had this ugly piece of marble taken to his house, and he worked diligently at it with his hammer and chisel. His eye discovered its beauty, though no one else did, and a beautiful angel came out of that stone.

There is something wonderful in our bodies; they do not look like it, but there is something wonderful in these poor, sinful, vile bodies of ours—so vile, so wicked. God's handiwork is upon us. The spirit will come out of us, 'better than angels'. We shall be above the angels. The angels are the servants of God; we shall be saints in glory above the angels.

When He comes then the spirit will come to the body again, and they will be joined together again; and we shall be 'caught up' to meet Jesus in the air, and go with Him in the grand procession, and

reign with Him in glory. Oh! who would not be a Christian?

Do you wish to get up? Are you really in earnest? Do you wish to be better? Do you wish to love God more? Then I will tell you something. How many people do you think there are now in this church? I suppose there are a thousand. Suppose you were to see a thousand little golden threads let down from God, and these little golden threads from God, each one came to each person's head, and were to draw each person up to heaven—I say, suppose a thousand golden threads came down, and each was to come to each person here, and draw you, and you, and you, up and up to heaven. What would you do with that thread? Would not you take great care of it? Would not you let it pull you up? Do you wish to have the thread? You have the golden thread now. If you trifle with it, it won't draw you; but if you pay attention to it, it will draw you up and up, and you will have an 'Ascension' indeed!—  
JAMES VAUGHAN.

### THE ASCENSION

'It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.'—LUKE XXIV. 51.

THE angels must speak to us. We have been gazing up after our ascending Lord; but they tell us we must come back to our everyday life here below, and see what we can do to get ready for His coming again. What must you do?

I. You must think of Jesus on His throne in heaven, and worship Him and praise Him.

II. You must remember the judgment to come, and who will be the Judge? None other than the same dear Saviour who died for you, and who now ever lives to plead for you.

III. You must try to be like Him by being gentle and loving and patient and forgiving.

Do you think that to remember these things will make you dull and unhappy? Oh, no! There could not be a greater mistake. What do you read about the disciples after they had seen their Master go up? They 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God'. It made them very happy, you see, to think of their Lord on His throne in heaven. He was their Lord and Master, but He was also their Saviour, their King, their God. They were full of joy when they thought of Him. And so should you be too. To have so loving and so glorious a Saviour should make your hearts very glad and thankful, and your whole lives very bright and happy. If religion makes you unhappy, it is the wrong sort. Your loving Father would have you serve Him very happily, with loving hearts full of joy and praise. This is the way in which even you can in heart and mind ascend up with your ascended Saviour.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 66.



# ST. JOHN

## OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

(For Good Friday)

'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'—JOHN I. 29.

WHEN the sun rises, does it make the world as light as it is at midday all at once? No.

No, we just see a streak of light first, and then the sky gradually gets lighter till we see the sun shining in all its strength.

This was just the way God enlightened the world with knowledge of Himself. He *gradually* revealed Himself; and just as the sun drives away the darkness, so Jesus came as 'the Sun of Righteousness,' to drive away the people's ignorance of God.

A great sculptor called Michelangelo once came across a block of marble in the streets of Florence, and had it taken to his house; and when his friends asked him what he was going to do with it, he told them he was going to set free the angel who was buried in it, meaning that he was going to carve a statue of an angel from it.

Now there was once a religion which, compared to the religion Jesus came to teach, was as different to it as the rough block of marble was different to the statue of the Angel made from it. That was the Jew's religion. It had its clergy, its public worship, and its Temple, and it had its fasts and festivals. This religion was called 'the shadow of good things to come,' and Jesus came to make that shadow a reality, and to give us all those good things, just as Michelangelo caused the angel to appear from the marble.

I. Something very special happened on the Day of Atonement. First of all the High Priest went into the Holy Place to make atonement for his own sins, and where did he go after that? Into the Holy of Holies.

Yes, the High Priest was the only person who ever went into the Holy of Holies, and he only went into it on the Day of Atonement. When he went into the Holy of Holies he sprinkled blood before the Mercy-seat. He did this to make atonement for the people's sins and to reconcile God to the people. The High Priest was the mediator between God and the people.

But all this was only a shadow of what was to come. The sacrifices, and the sprinkling of blood, and the High Priest, were all pointing to One who was to come; and who was that? Jesus Christ.

Yes, they all pointed to Jesus who was to come to be our High Priest. A priest must offer sacrifice.

When did our High Priest offer His sacrifice? When He died on the cross.

II. Good Friday is *our* Day of Atonement, when Jesus shed His blood on the cross to atone for our sins, and to reconcile God to us. Now we see why a *lamb* was the animal offered as the Passover sacrifice. What did St. John the Baptist call Jesus? 'The Lamb of God 'which taketh away the sin of the world'.

Yes, so you see the High Priest and the Lamb offered in sacrifice both pointed to Jesus.

When Jesus died on the cross to make atonement for our sins, He was the Priest, and the Victim He offered in sacrifice was Himself. When we were given to God in holy baptism, God received us as His own, because Jesus had reconciled God to us, and paid the penalty for our sins.

III. But there is one great difference between our High Priest and the Jewish High Priest. Before the Jewish High Priest could make atonement for the people's sins, he had first to make atonement for his own sins, just as a priest may make his Confession now, and receive Absolution before celebrating Jesus' death in the Holy Sacrament; but was it necessary for Jesus to do this? No.

No, there was no necessity for Jesus to make atonement for Himself, because He had never committed sin. But the Jewish High Priest was only an ordinary man, and subject to the same temptations as other men.

Is Jesus' work over yet? No.

No. His work is not over. He is 'a Priest for ever,' and He is always reminding His Father in heaven of what He did for us in the great Sacrifice on Calvary.—J. L. SMITH-DAMPIER, *Christ's Little Citizens*, p. 218.

## MARY'S TRIBUTE TO HER SON JESUS

'His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.'—JOHN II. 5.

WE may usefully consider these words first of all in connection with Mary herself, and then afterwards as regards the counsel which they contain.

I. We have here *Mary's Testimony to her Son*.—'They are the only words of Mary about her Son which have been preserved. We overhear them as they are spoken to the servants: 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it'. Mary's testimony is given in few words, but they are full of meaning. Behind them is an experience of thirty years' intercourse with Jesus of the most intimate kind. What a tribute there is in this saying to our Lord's strength of character, to His sympathy with His people even in

little things, and to His ability and willingness to help them! During His boyhood and youth at Nazareth Jesus had been 'subject' to Joseph and Mary; and He could not possibly have been a more dutiful Son. But He had gradually gained such influence with them by His purity and weight of character, that it seemed at length as if the relationship between Him and them had been reversed. His mother was probably by this time a widow; and she felt that Jesus was more to her than ever her husband had been. How she confided in His wisdom! How she leant on Him in every hour of difficulty and trial!

**II. We have here Mary's Counsel to Others.**—She had spoken first of all to Jesus Himself about the family perplexity; and she was not disturbed by the answer which He made to her. When he replied, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' His language was in no way disrespectful. And when He added, 'Mine hour is not yet come,' He meant that the moment to provide a fresh supply of wine had not yet arrived. Jesus does not reprove His mother; He only gives her a gentle hint to leave the situation in His hands; and He suggests that now, having finally gone from the home of His early years at Nazareth, and begun His public ministry, He must henceforth be always known as the Son of Man, and not as the Son of Mary.

The servants at the marriage-feast took Mary's advice, and promptly carried out our Lord's orders. The result was that the water which they poured into the waterpots was at once turned into wine. And if we also in our daily lives listen for the voice of the Lord Jesus, and practise obedience to His will, our lives will be enriched and ennobled, and He will change for us the water of earth into the wine of the kingdom. For the Son of Mary is the Christ of God, and the carpenter of Nazareth the Everlasting Son of the Father.—CHARLES JERDAN, *Messages to the Children*, p. 376.

### THE DOVE

'And He said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence.'—JOHN II. 16.

WE ought to be like the dove in three ways:—

**I. In Character.**—'Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves' (Matt. x. 16). What the lamb is among animals, the dove is among birds. It is the Divine emblem of purity and innocence—the bearer of the olive branch of peace. The whole character of the dove is in keeping with this estimate. Its voice, no less than its disposition, is the embodiment of sweetness. It has 'a tender mournful cadence which, heard in solitude and sadness, cannot fail to be heard with sympathy, as if it were the expression of real sorrow' (Gosse). It recalls the language of Isaiah, 'We mourn sore like doves'; or those beautiful words of Tennyson—

Every sound is sweet;  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

This gentleness of disposition renders the dove a defenceless creature, ill able to take care of itself, and it easily becomes the victim of persecution. Hence Hosea speaks of Israel as 'a silly dove without heart,' which shall 'tremble as a dove out of the land of Assyria'. And thus the words '*wise as serpents*' have to be added. The harmlessness of the dove must be supplemented by the wisdom of the serpent. And both elements are found in the peerless example of Jesus. See how he answered the quibbling questions of the Scribes and Pharisees. They tried to entangle Him in His talk; but His wisdom was more than a match for their cunning. The wolf was utterly discomfited by the lamb. And this is the only worthy ideal for His followers: 'Be ready always to give an answer concerning the hope that is in you,' but 'with meekness and fear,' 'be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves'.

**II. In Swiftness.**—The dove is one of the swiftest of birds. The carrier pigeon 'has been known to accomplish a flight of three hundred miles in little more than two hours'. Its wings are its strength. Upheld by them she can fly for many hours, and the birds of prey cannot overtake her. Homer himself mentions the dove as the emblem of swiftness and timidity. If you cannot fight like the eagle, fly like the dove, and, like the carrier pigeon, let your fight be *homeward*. May the homing instinct be as strong in you as in her. For it is only there, in the mountain home of God's grace, that your soul can find shelter. Speed, then, your flight 'as the doves to their windows'. 'Man's spiritual existence is like the flight of a bird in the air: he is sustained only by effort, and when he ceases to exert himself he falls' (Froude's *Bunyuan*). Let your spiritual advancement then be like the flight of a bird. Imitate the dove in its swiftness.

**III. In Sacrifice.**—The dove is pre-eminently the sacred bird. 'The dove among the Semites had a quite peculiar sanctity.' 'Sacred doves that may not be harmed are found even at Mecca.' It was to the birds what the lamb was to the animals—it derived its chief interest from its use in *sacrifice*.

'Let this *mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' He stooped to death, even the death of the cross, and we are called upon to stoop to something similar—to the great deep of self-surrender and self-sacrifice—the Crucifixion and the death of sin. This is the essence of all Christian sacrifice. We must be crucified with Christ, and rise and live through Him. We must be washed in His blood. We must be made great by His gentleness. We must be like the dove and the lamb in *sacrifice*.

In character, in swiftness, and in sacrifice, imitate the dove.—JOHN ADAMS, *Kingless Folk*, p. 26.

### TWICE BORN

'Ye must be born again.'—JOHN III. 7.

WHEN a great man dies every city or village he has lived in for a time, or had anything to do with, is very proud of telling its connection with him. And if it can only make it appear that he was born there,

it is prouder than ever. Did you ever hear of Homer? He was a poor blind singer who lived among the Greeks long, long ago, and who did a great deal to make the world brighter. When he died no less than *seven* cities wanted the honour of being his birthplace!

Seven cities contended for Homer dead,  
Among which, when living, he begged his bread.

In Geneva I once saw something just as foolish as this. There was a man born there who wasn't so good as Homer—though some people like him, for there is no accounting for taste! His name was Rousseau, and on one side of the river that flows through the city there is an inscription on an old house saying—'Rousseau was born here'; but on the other side of the river there is an inscription on another house saying he was born *there*! Now, I didn't believe he was born in both houses, or that Homer had seven birthplaces, and why?—because we know a man can be born a man only once.

Yes, but what does the text say? It says, 'Ye must be born again,' and it is Jesus who says it of every one of us, so it must be true. And perhaps it is not so wonderful after all.

Did you ever see that beautiful insect called the dragon-fly? It is almost as large as a tiny bird, and so quick and pretty. Well, it had to be born twice before it became the beautiful thing that it is. First of all it was a little egg lying in a muddy pool down in the water. Out of that egg there came a squirmy little creature, something like a worm, which lived in the water, moved about on the water, and had its home there. But one day it crept into a hollow twig on the water, and there it sickened and died; yet after it was dead there came out from it this beautiful dragon-fly with glossy wings and deep-blue corselet, and it flew away from the pool and didn't live in the water at all for it had wings and could mount into the air, and rise above earth and water altogether. That beautiful creature, with its wings neatly folded up, was inside the other creature when it was moving about under water. But it was born again, and then it was a thing for flowers and the sunshiny air, and not for the marsh and the pool.

And that is what Jesus means when He says we must be born again. We must have a new spirit, a new life, different from what we had at the first.

It is our heaven-life, but it must be born in us here. It is the life which His Holy Spirit creates—a life that loves only what is pure and good, and loving and true. Yes, the Great Life we all must get if we would be saved is that of a holy spirit. A holy spirit is a spirit that lives in what is good, and true, and pure and beautiful—and so loves Jesus and wants to please Him. Is that your spirit? Pray Jesus to breathe on your heart His breath of life—for so we must be born again if we would see Jesus in heaven or know Him here. Ask Jesus for a holy spirit, and He will give it you.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Pew*, p. 198.

## GOD SENDING HIS SON TO SAVE THE WORLD

(For Christmas)

'God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.—JOHN III. 17.

A HAPPY, joyous day this blessed Christmas—a happy and joyous day to all the world. And well it may be. No other day ever brought better blessings to our race. Christmas is the Saviour's birthday.

Carol, brothers, carol,  
Carol joyfully;  
Carol the good tidings,  
Carol merrily,  
And pray a gladsome Christmas  
For all good Christian men,  
Carol, brothers, carol,  
Christmas day again.

A missionary to the South Sea Islands was one day reading to a group of natives the remarkable announcement made in the text concerning the goodness of our Heavenly Father in sending His only Son into the world on a mission of mercy, when a chief interrupted him, and said, 'What words were those? Let me hear them again!' The missionary repeated them, when the native sprang to his feet and asked, 'Is that true? Can that be true? God love the world which did not love Him! God give His own Son to die that man might not die! Can that be true?'

The good missionary assured him that it was even so, and the poor islander could no longer restrain his feelings, but gave vent to them in tears of joy.

The story of God's marvellous loving-kindness towards lost and undone sinners ought never to be heard by us unmoved. We are so familiar with it that it will not startle and astonish us, as it did the South Sea islander; but our hearts must be hard indeed if they are not touched at the remembrance of what our Blessed Saviour has done for us.

Every child has heard of the odd conceit that at midnight, on Christmas Eve, all the oxen will be found upon their knees. Those who choose to laugh at the absurdity of this may at least be reminded by it how the Saviour, at His coning in great humility, should find them engaged.

Washington Irving, in his *Sketch Book*, records this pleasing incident in no less pleasing words:—

'While I lay musing on my pillow, I heard the sound of little feet pattering outside of the door, and a whispering consultation. Presently a choir of small voices chanted forth an old Christmas carol, the burden of which was—

Rejoice, our Saviour He was born  
On Christmas day in the morning.'

Immediately after the public services of the day it used to be the custom of the country gentleman, in England, to stand at his gate and give alms to the poor. No offering to the Saviour is more grateful to Him than the remembrance of His suffering children.



One of the prettiest Christmas customs is that of the Norwegians, who on this day give a dinner to the birds. Early in the morning every gable, gateway, and barn-door is decorated with a sheaf of corn fastened to the top of a long pole, and the little feathered songsters soon discover that the treat is designed for them. Even the poorest peasant will contrive to have a handful of grain put by for the birds.

Our thanks can never be earnest and hearty enough, because we never can fully appreciate what our Saviour really did for us—when He came into the world to suffer and die for us.

I have a touching little story to tell you which will help you to do this.

Years ago a Russian nobleman, with his wife and only daughter, were travelling on important business in the interior of the empire. Although it was earlier than the winter generally set in, the nipping frost had already stripped the trees, and turned the green fields to a dingy brown.

The carriage of the nobleman rolled up to an inn, and in great haste he ordered fresh horses to be put to it that they might reach the next station before night. The tavern-keeper entreated him not to venture any farther until the morning, as the wolves were already becoming fierce and dangerous. The nobleman thought that the man only told him this to alarm him, and thus secure a profitable customer for the night. He therefore laughed, and said it was too early for wolves, and ordered his coachman to drive on.

Besides the man who drove there sat on the box by his side a faithful servant, who had been born on the nobleman's estate, and who loved his master as he did his own life.

As the carriage rolled along the hardened snow all was quiet in the fields and woods, and there seemed no prospect of danger. After a while the little girl said to her father, 'What is that strange howling?' 'Oh, nothing,' he answered; 'it is only the wind sighing through the trees.' 'The child was silent, and closed her eyes; but presently she whispered, 'Listen, father! It does not sound like the wind to me.'

The father put his head out of the carriage window, and his face instantly grew pale. Far behind in the distance, through the clear, frosty air, he heard a noise, the meaning of which he well understood. He spoke to the driver in an undertone, 'The wolves, I fear, are after us. Make haste. Let us have our pistols ready.' The horses went faster and faster, but the dismal sound behind came nearer and nearer.

The nobleman tried to quiet the apprehensions of his wife and child, and said to the faithful servant who sat by the driver, 'When the wolves come up with us, do you single out one and fire, and I will do the same; and while the pack stop to devour them, we can hasten on.'

The plan was no sooner agreed upon than it was put in execution. The horrid troop came rush-

ing on, with a large dog-wolf at the head. Two shots were fired; two of the savage creatures dropped dead; and, while the others fell upon them, in their ravenous hunger, the carriage gained ground. The repast was a short one, and the taste of blood only made them more furious. Again they reached the carriage: two more shots were fired with the same result. The post-house was still at a distance, and as another make-shift the nobleman ordered the postilion to loose one of his leaders, and thus furnish another bait to the wolves. The poor horse was soon torn in pieces, and a second shared his fate.

The carriage now proceeded more slowly, being dragged on by only two jaded animals, and the place of safety was still far distant.

A panic seized on all, and no one knew what could next be done. Suddenly the devoted servant called out to his master, 'I have served you ever since I was a child: I love you as my own self. Nothing now can save you but *one* thing. Let me save you!'

In vain the affrighted nobleman besought him to desist. As soon as the bloodthirsty pack reached the carriage again, the faithful servant threw himself down amongst them.

The panting horses were pushed on at a gallop, and the travellers safely entered the post-house gate.

Greater love hath no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his *friend*. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, and His rebellious subjects, Christ died for us.—JOHN N. NORRIS, *Milk and Honey*, p. 28.

### THE DEAD SHALL HEAR

JOHN V. 25.

ONE day Jesus was preaching in Jerusalem, and He said, 'The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live'. The people knew that He was speaking of Himself. And they were astonished at His word. Some said they were words which only a bad man would speak. Some said that He was taking words into His lips that only God should speak.

'Who ever heard,' they said to each other, 'of the dead rising at the voice of a man? The dead? They are still and do not hear us when we call. To make a dead man live again!—only God could do that. And this is a mere man, Joseph's son from Nazareth.' But when they turned round again to listen, He was repeating the words: 'All that are in the graves shall hear His voice'.

But if those who thought and spoke in that way had known their Bible better and tried to know who He was who was speaking such words, they need not have been surprised. In the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel there is a vision of this very wonder.

One day God took the prophet to a valley that was filled with dead people's bones. 'Look at these bones,' He said: 'they are dry, they are bones of the dead.' Then He said, 'My people are like these bones; they are dry and lifeless; mere dead bones; dead as these bones are dead. The prophet looked

The heap of bones lay before him. They were without sign or touch of life. The flesh was gone. The blood was spilled out. Bone was no longer joined to bone. In all the heap there was neither eye, nor ear, nor warm, grasping hand. A whole nation was pictured there, dead, turned into dry bones.

But God said to the prophet: 'Speak to these bones, and they shall live'. And the prophet spoke as he was commanded. He spoke to the dry bones, and the bones heard his voice. And bone came to bone, and sinew to sinew, and flesh covered them, and skin, and blood came back into the veins, and eyes kindled in the eye sockets, and the red came into the cheek, and there was a movement, a stir, a rising up, and out of the heap of dry bones rose up a nation of living men and women. The dead heard the voice of the prophet, and those that heard lived. Never was a more wondrous vision shown to a prophet. It was a vision of dead souls brought to life again.

Now the world into which Christ came was like the valley of dry bones which Ezekiel saw. It was a world of dead souls. Sin had killed out the life which was once in them. The vision that Jesus saw was, in a different form, the same Ezekiel had seen. When He was living in Jerusalem it seemed to Him to be like walking over open graves with dead people in them.

The Lord was perhaps thinking of Ezekiel's vision when He said, 'The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God'. But He was thinking of a larger heap of dead people than Ezekiel saw: He was thinking of the dead of all nations and kindreds on the face of the earth: He was thinking of dead nations, dead races, a whole dead world. And in His love and to make those who heard Him glad, He said, 'The hour is coming when all belonging to the world who shall hear My voice shall live.

Of dead people there are two kinds. There are the dead people in the actual graves, the people whose bodies are dead; and there are dead people whose bones and flesh and blood are still living, but whose souls are dead. It was dead people whose souls only were dead that Ezekiel saw the vision of; it was both kinds of dead people the Lord was speaking about. Both kinds shall hear His voice: the dead whose souls are dead, and the dead whose bodies are dead.

Now we shall have another talk about this wonderful truth, and I shall try to make it all a little plainer to you.

I will tell you first of the dead whose souls are dead. The bodies are living; the souls are dead. Everything in them that should be thinking of God and heaven is dead. They can speak, they can think, they can buy, they can sell: but in everything that belongs to God they are dead. They do not know Him; they do not love Him; they do not care to think of Him; they do not live to Him. In relation to God they are just like dead people. The ear to hear His word is dead; the tongue to sing His praise is dead; the feet to go His messages are dead.

Of this kind of dead people Jesus said: 'The dead shall hear My voice and live'. And a great part of the Saviour's own preaching was preaching to the dead of this kind. The great Apostle Paul went among heathen nations to tell them about Christ. He also had to speak to dead souls. The nations he visited did not know God, nor care for Him, nor love Him. In relation to God they were just like dead people; they were like the dry bones that Ezekiel saw. But when Paul spoke to them they came to life; something in their hearts began to listen; in Paul's words they heard the voice of the Son of God, and one by one the dead souls became living souls. Companies of once dead people, joined together and became living Churches. And in Corinth, and Philippi, and Ephesus, and other cities, songs were sung to Jesus by living souls. Paul always looked upon such people as persons who had once been dead, but were now risen from the dead and alive.

The same thing happened wherever Christ's preachers went; dead souls hear the word, and those that heard began to live. Hundreds of years after Paul's time, preachers began to go into a great country covered with woods; it was a great wild country, among whose trees lived men and women, and wolves and bears. The men and women were ignorant of God; they had never heard of Him, they did not want to hear of Him: in the things of God they were just like dead people. These were the people from whom the German and English nations have come. But men filled with the spirit of Jesus went into the woods and told them of Jesus and of His love, and His pity, and His death on Calvary; and the dead souls listened and believed and turned to God, and became a great multitude of living souls.

A thousand years more passed, and in Germany and England the people of Christ began to think of nations that were still heathen, as they were once heathen, and they pitied them. They saw that they were dead souls, that they did not know God, that they worshipped idols, and were leading very poor and wretched lives. And holy men gave themselves to the work of preaching to those heathen nations. They spoke to the dead souls in those nations the word of Jesus; and the dead souls listened and heard and began to live. And now there are thousands and tens of thousands who were once heathens and are now Christians, and who are living to God and serving Him.

And this will go on as long as there are dead souls in the world; the dead will hear the voice of Jesus as it comes from the lips of missionaries and preachers, of holy men and holy women, and Christ's word will come true. Those that hear shall live; they shall turn to God and become His people.

But it is time now to speak to you of the dead whose bodies are dead. The dead who are lying in the graves shall one day hear the voice of Jesus, and shall come up out of their graves. The dear Lord, who in His preaching and the preaching of His

Apostles and missionaries has raised dead souls from the dead, shall raise dead bodies as well. He is a Saviour for both body and soul.

Last year, being in London, I went to see a show of pictures in the Grosvenor Gallery. They were pictures of battle-fields and war. Among the pictures was one of a whole company of soldiers lying dead in a field. They had been attacked by enemies the night before and shot down, and they were lying where they fell. Only their heads were visible, their bodies were covered by the long grass of the field. It was a dreary picture. Desolation and death lay upon it, and it was pitiful as well. At the top of the field stood a priest with a book in his hand, and behind him a single servant. The priest was praying for the dead. It was a kindly service. But the poor fellows on the grass heard no word of his prayer; hearing and fighting were over for them for ever; they were dead, and no man could bid them back into life again.

But this which the good priest could not do the priest's Master can. The hour is coming when those very soldiers and all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of that Master and come out of their graves.

I cannot tell you what this great wonder shall be like. It is high above me; I cannot understand it. I have seen a red new-ploughed field in spring, and a seedsman stepping over it scattering the seed. I have seen the same field in harvest all covered with yellow corn. It will be a wonder as great as that. The dead shall hear the voice of Jesus, and they shall come up out of their graves.

In the chapel of the Liverpool workhouse there is a monument to a Christian lady who once lived in that workhouse as an angel of mercy. The monument is a statue of the Angel of the Resurrection. He is sitting waiting for the hour of it. Across his lap is lying the trumpet by which he is to tell the hour. The hour is coming. Every year brings it nearer. The angel shall put the trumpet to his lips and blow, and in the sound the dead shall hear the voice of Christ, and the graves shall give up their dead.

Everything in the world shall seem to be going on as at other times. Men shall be building houses, and sailing ships, and buying and selling, and marrying and giving in marriage; children shall be hurrying to schools; trains shall be filled with passengers and rushing from town to town; then suddenly the sound of the trumpet shall be heard, and all over the world people shall have a new look in their eyes: their very bodies shall be seen to be changing their forms, and every one shall be saying to his neighbour, 'The dead have heard the voice of the Son of God and are rising out of their graves.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 176.

### THE MARVELLOUS MEAL

JOHN VI. 7.

JESUS commanded His disciples to make the people sit down in companies or rows of fifty on the green

grass. I imagine them forming a hollow square; Jesus with His Apostles in the midst: a row of fifty men, with a few women and children seated among them, in front; another row on the right hand, another row on the left hand, and another behind. Other rows sit behind these; twenty-five rows each way; making in all '5000 men, besides women and children'. What eager bustling, what a busy hum and clatter of voices as they all arrange themselves, like soldiers, at the word of command! Then what a strange solemn hush of wondering expectation, as Jesus, taking the basket in His hand, stands in the midst, looks up to heaven and gives thanks to God. Very likely He used the common blessing which the Jews were accustomed to repeat at their meals: 'Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, Who hast brought forth this fruit from the earth!' The Jews had a good saying that a man who takes God's gifts without thanksgiving seems to steal them. God's word says, 'In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you' (1 Thess. v. 18).

And now, while even the Apostles look on in amazement, marvelling what is to come next, their Master, as if He were doing the most natural thing in the world, takes one of the small loaves and breaks it, and hands the broken pieces first to Peter, then to John, and so on to each in turn; and still as He distributes—no one can tell how—the store grows. The Apostles stretch out first their hands, then the skirts of their long robes or mantles till each is loaded with as much as he can well carry. Then they hasten along the ranks of hungry people, who stretch out eager hands for the miraculous food, hardly believing it real until they taste it. Those in the hinder ranks are ready to cry with disappointment as they see the disciples giving away the last crumb; but they have not long to wait. Jesus stands ready, and as the disciples go back to Him for a fresh supply, the store is undiminished: there is bread enough for all, and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would.

'And they did all eat (says St. Mark) and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes.'

It was a very plain meal, only barley-cake and salt fish, with a draught of clear water from some cool mountain brook. Yet I would rather have been there—would not you?—than at Belshazzar's feast, or Queen Esther's banquet, or the table of the rich man who fared sumptuously every day.

This Marvellous Meal—more than five thousand people fed and satisfied from one basketful of bread and fish; and twelve times as much left at the end of the meal as there was at the beginning—is the only one of the miracles of our Lord which is related in all the four Gospels. St. John, in the sixth chapter of his Gospel, not only tells the story of the miracle, but records a discourse of our Lord when He was teaching, a day or two afterwards, in the synagogue at Capernaum, in which we see what lessons we are to learn from this glorious miracle.



For you must notice that all our Saviour's miracles contain great and beautiful lessons, for the sake of which they are recorded in the Gospels. Never did He work a miracle merely to show His power. When the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees asked Him to do so, He refused. Every miracle had its own immediate purpose and use. Nevertheless, their use at the moment—that is, the benefit enjoyed by those who were healed, or had their sight or speech given them, and so forth, was not their chief purpose. Their noblest use was what St. John speaks of when he tells how Jesus wrought His first miracle, 'and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him'. The Lord himself speaks of His miracles as proofs that He had indeed come from the Father, and was speaking the words of God (see John v. 86; xiv. 10, 11; xv. 24). But besides this they are illustrations—that is, a kind of pictures—of His power, pity, and love. When we see Him cleansing the poor leper, we have an image of the foulness and hideousness of sin, and of His power to cleanse us from all sin. When He opens the eyes of the blind, the mouth of the dumb, the ears of the deaf, and bids the paralytic or the maimed to walk, we are reminded that He only can open our minds and hearts to the truth and give us strength to do what is right. When we hear Him say, 'Believest thou that I can do this?' or, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole,' we are taught that if He is to be our Saviour, we must believe in Him—trust Him wholly at once and always.—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 224.

### THE BEAUTY OF THE KING'S TITLES

'I am the bread of life.'—JOHN VI. 35.

THESE are words that Jesus spake in reference to Himself. And here we have another of the beautiful titles by which we learn to know Him. This title is not so striking as some of the others given to Him in the Bible. It is very plain and practical, but very instructive.

We know a good deal about bread. It is on our tables all the time. We see it, and handle it, and eat it, every day. And we should be very thankful that Jesus has been pleased to compare Himself, not only with suns and stars, which are very far off, but also with things that are as familiar to us as our daily bread. 'I am the bread of life.' Our lesson from this text is—*Jesus compared to bread*. There are three reasons for this comparison; and in each of them we see what beauty there is in this title of Jesus our King.

**I. Jesus may be Compared to Bread, in the First Place, because Bread is 'a Necessary Thing'.**—If a person is hungry and starving for want of food, then nothing is more necessary for that person than bread. But until we know Jesus our souls are hungry and starving. He alone can feed them.

*The worm in a circle of fire.*—There was an Indian once who had become a Christian. He was so full of thankfulness to Jesus for pardoning his sins,

and saving his soul, that he was never tired of talking about Him, and of telling his friends what a wonderful Saviour He was.

One day a friend asked him what it was that Jesus had done for him, that led him to be always talking so much about Him? Instead of replying in words, the grateful man took *this* way of showing what Jesus had done for him, and how necessary he had found His help to be.

He took some dry chips and little bits of wood. With these he made a circle about a foot in diameter. In the midst of this circle he placed a worm. Then he set fire to the circle of dry materials, and instantly there was a wall of fire blazing all round the poor worm. The worm crawled up to the edge of the fire, first on one side, and then on another. And at last, finding there was no way of escape for it anywhere, it went to the middle of the circle, as far from the fire as it could get, and then lifted its head up towards the sky, as much as to say that there was no help for it, unless it should come from above. Then the Indian put his finger down and let the worm crawl up on it, and so lifted it out from the danger that surrounded it.

'There,' said the Indian, 'you see what Jesus did for me. God was angry with me for my sins. His anger surrounded me on every side, just like that circle of fire. I had looked everywhere for help, but could not find it. Then Jesus reached forth His hand and saved me. Do you wonder that I love to tell about what He has done for me?'

**II. The Second Reason why Jesus may be Compared to Bread is, that Bread is 'a Strengthening Thing'.**—When we have no bread or food for our bodies, the flesh wastes away from our bones, and we have no strength left to enable us to work, or walk, or even to stand. Sometimes we hear of a vessel out at sea that has run short of provisions. All the men have been on short allowance of food for many days. Perhaps half a biscuit is all that each man has had to eat for twenty-four hours. After awhile a strange vessel comes in sight. When it comes nearer the suffering crew make signals of distress. The stranger lays to, that is, stops sailing. He sends a boat to see what is the matter. When the officer in charge of the boat reaches the deck of the vessel in distress, he looks round in surprise. He says to himself—'Is it possible that these are men? They look more like ghosts, or walking skeletons. How thin and hollow their cheeks! How wasted and shrivelled their limbs! How they totter when they try to walk! How weak they are! Hardly one of them has strength enough to hold the helm, or pull a rope, or furl a sail.'

This is the effect produced upon the body by want of food. But when we have plenty of good bread, or wholesome food, it is very different. Then our cheeks are round, and full, and rosy. Our limbs are plump and strong. We can walk, or run, or work with pleasure. We are ready for anything we have to do.

And it is just so with our souls. Jesus is the

bread which they must eat. When we know Him, and believe on Him, and love Him, then we are living on Him. He becomes the bread of life to us. And as we eat this bread we find it to be a strengthening thing. It helps us to do our duty, and to find pleasure in doing it.

*Cheer him.*—There was a fire once in a large city. While the upper stories of a handsome dwelling were wrapped in smoke, and the fire was raging fiercely in the lower stories, a loud shriek told the fireman that there was still some one in the building in danger of being burned to death.

In a moment a ladder was reared. The upper end of it had hardly touched the heated walls, before a brave young fireman sprang to the ladder, and rushed up the rounds of it on his errand of mercy. But stifled by the smoke he stopped, and seemed as if he was on the point of going back without entering the burning building.

The crowd of people looking on watched him with intense interest, for they feared that a moment's delay might cost a precious life. That moment's pause seemed very long.

As they were almost trembling with fear, a voice from the crowd cried out—'Cheer him! cheer him!' In a moment a loud, ringing, wild 'hurrah' burst from that excited multitude. The fireman heard the cheer. He started up amidst smoke and flame, and disappeared through one of the windows. And now that vast crowd is still as the grave. Every voice is hushed; and every eye is fixed on that window. How long the seconds seem! Will he come? is the question that every heart is whispering. And now look at the window. There is the blackened form of the fireman, and clasped in his arms he has a little child. It is saved from a dreadful death by the courage of that brave fireman. Noble fellow! How loudly the crowd cheer him as he comes down the ladder! and how well he deserves it! When he paused on his way up the ladder he needed just a little more strength and a little more courage. And what he needed that hearty cheer of the crowd gave him. And what that cheer did for the fireman, Jesus does for His people. He is the bread of life to them, and gives them all the strength and courage they need.

III. But there is a Third Reason for Comparing Jesus to Bread, and this is—that Bread is a 'Satisfying Thing'.—When we are hungry the desire for food is very strong. There is a sort of gnawing feeling in the stomach that makes us very uncomfortable. But when we get as much good bread as we want, and eat it, then that gnawing, craving feeling disappears. The wants of the body are supplied, and we feel satisfied.

And it is just the same with our souls. The soul can be hungry as well as the body. And when this is the case a great longing will be felt, which will make us unhappy. And what our souls need then is Jesus. He is the only bread that is suited to our wants. And when we learn to know Jesus, and be-

lieve in Him, then we really eat the bread of life, and our souls feel satisfied and happy.

*The queen and the child.*—Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, had a palace at Schönhausen. One day Queen Elizabeth, the wife of Frederick, was walking in the garden connected with this palace. Her gardener had a little niece named Gretchen with him in the garden. She was on a visit to her uncle. Gretchen lived in the city of Berlin. Her father was a gardener too. He was a poor man, but he was a Christian, and he had taught his little daughter to know and love Jesus. The queen talked with little Gretchen, and was so much pleased with her simplicity, and bright intelligent answers to the questions she asked, that she told her uncle to let her come to the palace the next day and make a visit.

So Gretchen dressed herself very neatly and went to the palace at the time appointed.

One of the court ladies who knew about it saw her coming, and told the queen, who was then at dinner. The good queen was much pleased to hear that her little visitor had come. She ordered her to be brought in at once. Gretchen ran up to her kind friend, courtied to her very respectfully, and kissed her dress. At the request of the queen she was placed on a chair by her side, where she could see at once all the splendid sight which that table presented. There was a large company dining with the queen. Lords and princes, and officers of the army, and ladies were there, sparkling with gold and jewels. It was the first time this innocent child had ever seen such a sight, and the queen felt curious to know what effect it would have upon her.

Gretchen looked quietly at the costly dresses of the company, and at the beautiful dishes of china and gold that covered the table, and was silent for awhile. Then while all the persons at the table were looking at her, she clasped her little hands and closed her eyes, and repeated in a simple, touching way this verse of a hymn her father had taught her:—

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are—my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.

The company were greatly surprised and deeply moved. One of the ladies said to the queen, with tears in her eyes, 'Happy child! We thought she would envy us, but we have much more reason to envy her.'

That little girl knew Jesus as the bread of life, and she was so satisfied with this bread that she did not want the rich and beautiful things that were before her in that great palace.

Bread is a necessary thing—a strengthening thing—a satisfying thing. Here we have three good reasons why Jesus may be called 'the bread of life'. Let our earnest prayer be—'Lord, evermore give us this bread!'—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King* (2nd edition), p. 211.

## JUDGE NOT BY APPEARANCES

JOHN VII. 14-31.

EVEN a child has got to judge sometimes.

You are judging when you say: These are rude children; we will not play with them. You are judging when you say: These are good children; we will keep by them. But it is a very hard thing to judge aright. To judge aright we should see the hearts of people. And only God can see the heart. We can only judge by the appearance; the outside only is what we see. Now our Lord here tells us not to judge in that way. Those who judge in that way are sure to go wrong. Why did the Lord say this? Because the people in Jerusalem judged Him in that way.

They saw a poor man, one whom nobody even knew at school, one who had done a work of healing not long before on a Sabbath day, and *looking at the appearance*, the poor dress, the homely speech, they said: Oh, that man is too poor to be good. Looking also at this, that He had been working on a Sabbath day, making a man who was sick whole, they said: A good man would not do any work on a Sabbath. He must be bad. But it was the Lord Jesus they judged in that way.

Now this is a lesson much needed. There are so many who judge people by appearance, and often judge good people to be bad. They say: Oh, that person is always praying or talking about religion, speaking about the soul; it is just pretence, just hypocrisy. He's such a tiresome man that with his talk about religion.

Some young people think that everybody who talks about religion is only pretending, and is a hypocrite.

It is now a good many years ago since, on a Rhine steamer, a stranger, an Englishman, was judged in this way. He had been indeed giving away some tracts, and among those to whom he gave a tract was a company of young men playing cards. 'Such pretence!' they said. 'A regular hypocrite!' said the captain. But he had given one of his tracts to a lady, the Countess D—, and she judged him in a better way. As the steamboat went up the Rhine, the passengers came to know each other a little better, and then it turned out that this stranger was going to do a very just thing. He had once been an officer in the army, and in the wars he had bought a horse from a German officer, and before he could give him the money the German officer and himself were ordered different ways, and he lost all sight of the gentleman from whom he had got the horse. But he put the price of the horse in the bank to gather interest year by year, and after long years in some way or other he learned that the officer was still alive, and now he was going to him with the price of the horse and interest for the delay in paying.

At the end of the voyage, however, a strange thing happened. The luggage of this English traveller was not to be found. It had been stolen or left behind, and he had no money and could not speak a word of German.

Now this lady of rank, being a Christian, had been present when he gave the tract to the card-player and had after that heard the story of his life. She went up to him, and although she could read, yet she could speak no English, but she held open an English Testament at Acts xvi. 15; it reads thus: 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there'. So he went, and by and by the missing bags were found. Then this just man said: 'Although I cannot offer you money for your hospitality, I must give what would have been my hotel bill for your schools'.

Do not judge by appearances; do not look down on anyone or judge harshly.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 124.

## FOLLY OF JUDGING BY OUTWARD APPEARANCES

'Judge not according to the appearance.'—JOHN VII. 24.

Two gallant knights met one summer's day, in the olden time, in the still greenwood, and soon got into a high dispute about a very small matter.

A broad shield hung between them, fastened to the branch of a tree. Neither of the knights knew to whom it belonged, or why it was left hanging there, and each began to ask the other concerning it.

'Whose is this white shield?'

'White? Do you call it white? Why, it is black!'

'Do you take me for blind, or a fool, that you tell me what my own eyes can see is false?'

And so words were banded about from one to the other, until the dispute became so violent that they had actually drawn their swords for a bloody conflict, when a third knight came riding towards them—a man of noble bearing, and serene, calm-judging eyes. Looking at the angry men, he said, 'You should be brothers in arms. Why do I see these passionate gestures, and hear these fierce words?'

Each knight made haste to explain the imposition which the other had tried to practise upon him. The stranger smiled, and riding to one side of the shield, and then to the other, he said, very quietly, 'Do not charge with your weapons just yet. Change places!'

They did so, and behold, the knight who had seen the white side of the shield saw now the black side also; and the knight who had been ready to do battle for the black stood face to face with the white side. Ashamed of their hot haste, they apologised one to the other, and rode out of the greenwood as good friends as ever.

The lesson taught in this story is a very important one. Half the misunderstandings and quarrels which disturb the peace and destroy the happiness of families and neighbourhoods, might be prevented, if those who engage in these disputes could see both sides of a question at once. How wise, then, are those people who are careful never to form hasty opinions, and who wait until they have seen or heard both sides, before venturing to determine which is right!



Hasty conclusions are seldom safe ones. The rule holds good in matters of everyday life, and in the more important concerns of religion; and it was with reference to both that our Saviour says in the text, 'Judge not according to the appearance'.

The early settlers of Virginia, having discovered some shining particles in a rock, nearly went mad with joy, supposing that it was gold. 'There was no talk,' as one of the old chroniclers has it, 'no hope, no work, but dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, load gold—such a bruit of gold that one crazy fellow wished to be buried in the sands, lest the refiners by their art should make gold of his bones.'

In spite of the more sober judgment of Captain John Smith, a ship was laden with the worthless shining dirt and sent home to England.

Hundreds and thousands in all ages, who have been foolish enough to judge by outward appearance, have made blunders quite as ridiculous, and sometimes with much more serious loss.

To impress this point on your minds, I shall go on to mention several reasons why it is not proper to judge in this way.

I. To judge according to the appearance **Is not a True Way of Judging.**—Some of the most delicious fruits are encased in rough and unsightly coverings; and one who had not tasted them before would be likely to pass them by, and go on to others which seemed to be better.

There is a homely saying which everybody has heard, when a person turns out to be more clever than was expected: 'He is a perfect singed cat!'

These everyday experiences prove the soundness of the position just laid down. I could give a good many pleasant illustrations of it, but one must suffice.

One day a man dressed in plain, coarse clothes walked into a little English village carrying a bundle tied up in a handkerchief. He made his way to the 'Red Lion' inn, and sat down on a bench in front of the house, quietly eating a bit of bread and cheese which the waiter had brought him. No one noticed him or cared for him. After a while the stage-coach drove up; the little wayside mail-bag was thrown off, and all the gossips and idlers of the village assembled about the post office window to see who had got letters, and to pick up a few items of news. The contents of the bag were soon assorted, and there was nothing deserving of notice except a formidable-looking letter, with a large seal, directed to Lord Somebody.

The postmaster examined it with great care, and then read the superscription aloud. Everybody was on tiptoe of expectation, and various plans were proposed for giving the strange nobleman a proper reception whenever he should honour the village by passing through it. One thought it would be well to have the children of the parish assemble in their Sunday clothes, and hail him with an appropriate ode; another, that the clergyman should be requested to deliver an address of welcome; and a third, that an arch of evergreens and flowers should

be made to span the road near the entrance of the village.

Meanwhile, the stranger in the homespun dress sat silently watching the proceedings; and when the public curiosity had worn itself out over the letter, he stepped up to the open window of the post office and claimed it as his own. Astonishment, indignation, and a variety of other emotions took possession of the crowd. But when the postmaster, who had seen the nobleman somewhere before, and now recognised him in his plain clothes, handed him the letter, every one began to try and do away with the unfavourable impression which had been made on the stranger, by the cool contempt with which he had been treated so long as he had been thought to be only an ordinary traveller. Lord Somebody declined the honour proffered him, and taking his bundle in his hand left the village, giving the advice contained in the text as his parting legacy to its mortified inhabitants.

II. To judge according to the appearance is **Not a Just Way of Judging.**—Many hundred years ago, when the Tabernacle of the Lord was at Shiloh, a good woman named Hannah went in to pray, and to ask for a special blessing which she greatly longed for. It was in her heart that she spake to the Lord, and no loud word was uttered. But He who knoweth all things could hear her. Eli the priest saw her come in, and observed her at her prayers, and judging from outward appearance he judged very unjustly. Seeing the woman moving her lips but making no sound, he hastily concluded that she must be tipsy, and was rash and unguarded enough to accuse her with it.

How it must have wrung Eli's heart, when she meekly answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord'.

People who wear the longest faces, and who talk the most religiously, have not always the most of the love of God in their hearts. As Shakespeare has strongly worded it:—

A man may smile, and smile, and be a villain.

III. Another reason why we should not form our opinions from outward appearance is because it **Is not a Safe Way of Judging.**—The ice on the river appears to be as solid as the earth, but how many who venture upon it pay for their temerity—some with a cold souse in the waters, and others with their lives!

Surely these are reasons enough for remembering and acting upon our Saviour's words, 'Judge not according to the appearance'.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 181.

#### THIRSTING AND FINDING

JOHN VII. 32, 39.

THERE are two things here which every one of us, old and young, must take to heart. Here is the

Saviour telling us there is a time coming when certain people shall seek Him and not find Him. And again a little farther on He says: If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink; which is the same as if He said: If any one thirsts for Me, that one shall find Me.

It is a strange fact that He was in the world, moving along the streets, living in the houses; He was seen and heard speaking every day; yet there were crowds of people who met Him, who saw Him, who heard Him, but who did not find Him.

But side by side with these, there were others, many others, who both sought Him and found Him.

Now you might think, and sometimes you do think, it would be easier to find Christ if He were in Liverpool or London, as He was in Galilee and Judea, moving along the streets; you might think it would only be needful to go up to Him, to kneel before Him, to say to Him, Lord Jesus, place your hand on my head and bless me.

But you see it really was not easier. There were thousands who saw Him and heard Him and did not find Him.

They did not know that it was the Saviour they heard and saw; they saw only a Man like themselves, and they did not feel any need for a Saviour. It was only when their heart thirsted, when they wanted with all their heart to see Him, that they did see the Saviour in the common-looking Man. Now it is not so much different to-day.

Then a common-looking Man, now a common-looking book; the words look like common words, but they are the words of the living Saviour. It is He who is speaking them, and although now in a book, they are yet all the same as if they came from His lips fresh this very day.

And many read the words and hear them, and do not find Christ in them. How is that? It is because they do not want to find Him, they do not seek Him with all their heart. But if anyone thirsts, i.e. if He wants with all His heart to find Him, he will hear and find Jesus in His words. The hearts that find Him there are those that want to find Him, that are athirst.

But now notice the wonderful offer the Lord makes: If anyone wants something good with all the heart, he is to come unto Him and ask, and he shall have it.

If there is some good thing, some great thing, something it would make us better to have, if we come to Jesus greatly wishing it, thirsting for it, we shall have it.

I know a child who wants to be happy. There is not a child I ever knew who did not want to be happy; every child does. God made you to wish for happiness. Jesus says, 'Come unto Me, and you shall find it'.

Jesus knows that the first step to happiness is to see that God loves you, and the next is to love God. And Jesus works these two loves into the heart that you may be happy. Some people fancy that religion

is to make people sad; but it is not so; it is the beginning of happiness.

I know another child, and the desire of that one's soul is to be clever. Perhaps I am speaking now to some very clever children; you are eager on your lessons, on marks, on examinations, on prizes; you thirst to be great scholars and to know things.

Well, Jesus likes that. He likes that you should be eager for lessons, and by and by learned in good things. He giveth understanding unto the simple; not to the clever only. And he says, 'Come unto Me, and come thirsting, and you shall have learning as well as happiness'.

In Psalm cxix. one says, 'God has made me wiser than the ancients, and I have more understanding than all my teachers'. Jesus teaches us to know God, and to know God is the best learning.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 91.

### THE KINDLY LIGHT

#### 'Lux mea Christus'

'I am the light of the world.'—JOHN VIII. 12.

THE words of this motto speak to us of three things. First, they tell us of light; secondly, of Him who is the light; and third, of our own need of light, each one for himself and herself.

I. **Light.**—There is nothing we know so well, nothing, perhaps, we understand so little. The men of science tell us very wonderful facts about light; they tell us how fast it travels—so fast that our bicycles, motor-cars, express trains, even our electric telegraph, cannot compare with its tremendous speed. They can tell us much about the strange wave-like motion by which it is scattered, and how the longer and shorter waves produce the lovely colours with which we are familiar in the rainbow, or which are perfectly revealed in the spectrum. But of light, in its own nature, we do not actually know a great deal, and that most of us must take on faith, if we know anything at all about it. Yet everybody knows what light can do. We are aware that we pass through the most lovely country on a pitch dark night, and never discover its beauty. Mountains, rivers, lakes, trees may be all around us, but we cannot see them. Let the morning dawn, however, and the sun rise, then let us go forth and look down that valley, and every detail of its loveliness stands out clearly. The blue sky overhead, with the fleecy clouds, the varied tints of the lichen-covered rocks, the dark-brown stream specked with white foam, the rich purple of the heather-clad hills, all is visible. What has wrought the change? Light. They were all there before. The light has not created them, but it has made it possible for us to know about them and enjoy them. Not only 'beauty,' but 'safety,' the light brings us. We dare not walk along cliff-paths or climb precipitous mountains in the darkness, lest we slip and lose our lives, but if we have nerve and skill sufficient these paths become quite possible in the daylight. Health, too, comes from the light. The old Greeks looked on the Sun-

God as the healer, and modern medicine teaches the same faith. Disease flourishes in this light. We have next to discover the nature of this light.

II. Our motto tells us it is **Christ**.—There is a beautiful picture in one of the libraries in America, which contains a group of all the great prophets of the Old Testament times. At one end of the painting are two men—Malachi and Zechariah, with their faces earnestly turned forward, their hands outstretched, their fingers pointing to some object that attracts them, and a tender clear light shines on them, the source of which we cannot see. If you turn to their books you will understand the artist's meaning. They looked eagerly for Christ, and spoke of His coming very soon after their own day. They were like men who stand on the top of some high mountain a little while before sunrise. Behind them the shadows are rapidly being driven lower and lower down the slopes, or are lurking only in the valleys. They are all silent, eager, expectant. Some have their hands outstretched toward the East, as they catch the first glimpse of the sun's disk above the horizon. These prophets knew the world was soon to be flooded with light, when Christ should show men how good and loving God is, and when He came Jesus Christ took this name for His own. 'I am the light of the world,' he told the people. The poets of Rome and the wisest men of Greece were looking as eagerly as were the Hebrew prophets for such a sunrise. People were finding everywhere that they were dwelling in darkness, or at best in the half-lights of a hazy dawn. They needed and they longed for the happy, joyous Sun. Jesus brings that light. Men were very full of sorrow when their friends died, or at the thought of their own summons to another world. Jesus bade them look on Him as the Resurrection and the Life, and to believe that when a man loved Him he would never really die.

III. **Christ my Light**.—You have been in a great house lit by electricity. The wires are properly laid into every apartment; the lamps are there, the little knobs to switch it off and on. You have passed from a brilliantly illuminated hall into a room, and shut the door behind you. It is quite dark. What is wrong? Has the electricity no power here? In this room, the one place in all that house, it refuses to make light? Has this part of the house no connection with all the rest? Oh yes, you have only one little thing to do, push down that little brass button by the side of the door, and the room in a single moment is ablaze with light. Sometimes I am in a company of people in a private house, in a church, or out in the country. We are all speaking about Jesus, and His goodness, beauty, and power. I see many faces glowing with joy responsive to the things said of one they love—but I notice one face in which there is no such light, only the mark of weariness or annoyance. I ask myself why? Jesus Christ has power. Jesus Christ is equally near us all. Jesus Christ is eager to make all our lives happy and full of light; but that man or woman, maybe

boy or girl, has not believed it. The work of faith has not connected that life with Christ. We may say, 'Christ is the light of the world,' and be none the happier. But when we say, 'Christ is my light,' then everything becomes different. The change is as great as was that in the dark room when the little button was touched and the electric light flooded it.

The wise and good Erskine of Linlathen once wrote to a friend, 'Happy the heart that has learned to say *my* God! All religion is contained in that short expression, and all the blessedness that man or angel is capable of.'—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottos with Great Lessons*, p. 63.

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

'I am the Good Shepherd.'—JOHN X. 11.

I. **The Shepherd**.—'I am the Good Shepherd,' Christ says. His words mean, I only; there is but One, and I am that One. Lay the stress on the words *I* and *the*. A minister of the Gospel is called a pastor, which is the Latin word for shepherd. He is an under-shepherd, while Christ is 'the Chief Shepherd'. Christ has no rival, no helper or partner in the shepherding of souls. We read of two flocks, Jew and Gentile, but never of two flocks, never of two shepherds. Passing strange that one to the outward eye so poor and helpless as Christ then was should calmly and boldly say, 'I am the Good Shepherd'; and should claim all Jews and all Gentiles as belonging to His fold; and should denounce as an hireling and robber every other being who disputes His claim. Ask yourself why Christ stands up before all mankind and declares Himself to be the only real Shepherd. That were utter madness were He not more than man, or angel, or archangel. We thus pay homage to Him as God. While more than man, He is also more than a shepherd. The shepherd in the East is, I may say, the god of the sheep; but for him they should soon perish. But all illustrations fail here. We must add image to image if we would rise toward the sacred height of this great truth. The Puritans said that they found in the Bible no less than one hundred and eight names of Christ.

'The Good Shepherd' is literally the beautiful, or noble shepherd; for goodness is the highest moral beauty. Surely nothing can be more beautiful than Christ's unwearying love in seeking the lost. Are all your thoughts of Him dull and cold? Have you never felt His beauty, His kindness, His surpassing grace, His excellences and attractions? Do you never heartily thank God for 'the Good Shepherd'?

II. **The Shepherdless Soul**.—You know that the sheep in Palestine are quite different from our sheep. In our lowland fields sheep are safe even amid the snows of winter, but the sheep of the East need a shepherd almost as much as an infant needs a nurse. If we look at a picture of the modern shepherd of Palestine we see he has a big oak club, with a spiked head, swinging from his girdle, and a long pole in his hand. These are 'the rod and the staff'



of the twenty-third Psalm. With the staff or crook he guides and encourages the sheep, and with the club or rod he drives off wolves and robbers. Then every Eastern shepherd is a good bone-setter, for often his sheep backslide, or slide backwards over the sharp rocks or stones, and break their bones. The sheep must be brought into the fold at night, and by day they are often in danger, and know not where to find pasture and water. Our sheep leave only some of their wool on thorn-bushes, but in the East thorn-bushes are very many and very strong, and the sheep caught in them often cannot struggle into freedom. Even the flesh of men is sometimes 'torn with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars' (Judges viii. 7). You remember how, when Abraham was about to offer up Isaac, he saw a ram caught in the thicket. Moreover, the strayed sheep usually loses its wits, and cannot find its way to the fold. Marco Polo tells us that the Tartar robbers in the dark months used to ride on mares whose foals were at home; and when the robbers had taken their prey, they just laid the reins on the mares' necks, and they went straight home in the darkest night. But even in broad daylight the sheep has no home-finding instinct. In the desert, far from its proper good, it can only lie down and die. And such is the soul without the Good Shepherd—a lonely outcast, girt round with all sorts of dangers. I may again borrow an illustration from Marco Polo. He tells us that when travellers linger behind the desert caravan a shadowy voice calls them by their name and allures them from their route. They follow, and still it calls; and, when they have wandered from the path, a mocking silence follows more terrible than the deceiving voice. The wind of evening has lifted the light sands, and quietly covered the marks of feet and camel hoofs upon the wilderness, as the breeze smooths the wakes of ships on the yielding deep. Nothing is left for the bewildered traveller but to lie down and die.

I have known several young people who have been more deeply moved by the tenth chapter of John's Gospel than by any other words in the Bible. The picture of the lost sheep seemed to them very sad; it interested their imagination; they owned that it was true; then they felt that it was the picture of themselves. Thus God's good Spirit moved them to self-pity; they thought of the Good Shepherd; they plainly heard His voice, and gave themselves up to Him.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, in his *Lives of the British Poets*, tells us that he visited William Collins the poet during his last illness. Collins confessed that he then cared for only one book. Johnson took it into his hand; it was an English New Testament, such as children carry to the school. 'I have but one book,' said Collins, 'but that is the best.' During his youth he had wandered from the fold into the desert, but trial had revealed to him the miseries of the shepherdless soul. His marble monument in Chichester Cathedral is a beautiful poem and an eloquent sermon. His lyre and poems lie neglected on the

ground, while his Bible lies open before him. Only in his Bible did he find the green pastures and the still waters that refresh the world-weary soul.

It is a delight to join ourselves now to—

**III. The Shepherded Soul.**—It is saved by the Shepherd's hand, led by His voice, is fed by Him, and follows Him. Let alone that strayed sheep must have perished miserably in the desert. Then Christ says, 'My sheep hear My voice': mark you, not My truth, nor My words, but My *voice*. To them He is a living, present, speaking Saviour. The gentle whisperings of His Spirit are heard in their souls, and they know for certain whose voice it is. He gives His voice for their ear-guidance, and His footprints for their sight-guidance. And it is sweetest music to them. The early Christians placed Orpheus with his lyre among their favourite symbols. Orpheus thus served a double purpose, for he reminded them of the drawing power of Christ, and he also did not arouse the fury of the heathens.

The old-world story ran that Orpheus was in the good ship *Argo* with the Argonauts, when, charmed by the wicked songs of the Sirens, they turned the prow to the fatal isle. Orpheus then tuned his lyre, and the music of the Sirens seemed but a rude, jarring noise compared with his heavenly strains. The sailors, moved by a better delight, at once steered away from their seducers, and were rescued from a shameful death. These fables are facts with us, the early Christians said. Christ is our Divine Orpheus, for His music has broken the spell of all the Sirens of sinful pleasure, and has moved our rude stony hearts, and charmed us into following Him.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 151.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD

'I am the Good Shepherd.'—JOHN X. II.

WHEN Jesus calls Himself a shepherd, you know at once that He does not mean that He is a keeper of sheep, such as graze the fields and yield us wool. The trade that Jesus once wrought at with His hands (is it not a wonder that He should have done so?) was, probably, the carpenter's. But He is a shepherd in a high sense. He keeps people as a shepherd keeps sheep. His flock are men, His sheep are souls. He is a keeper of souls. And He calls them His flock, to teach us several things about their character, and about His care of them. I think there are seven views of Christ's shepherd-care worth remembering.

**I. Jesus Gathers the Flock.**—They are all far away at first from the place where He feeds them. And He goes after them to seek them out. He finds them in a wilderness, weary and wretched; hungry and ready to die, for want of pasture; torn and bleeding with the thorns and briars; the wolves are roaring round them, and the dreadful lion is raging to devour them. Jesus calls them to Him; but they run away from Him. He follows them, lays hold on them, and carries them home rejoicing. You can picture a shepherd doing all this.

The meaning is, that we are all at first far away in our hearts from God—very unhappy, but not willing to go back to Him. We are in danger of perishing, and Satan is watching for our destruction. Jesus sends His Gospel to us. He bids us trust Him, and be happy. But we will not. Then He sends His Spirit and changes our hearts, and brings us to repentance and peace. And when this happens He rejoices over us. Christ is happy when sinners hearken to Him and live.

There are other servants employed gathering the flock. One is very black and grim to see. His name is Death. But he never hurts even the least lamb. Behind him are bright angels, and he gives the souls of good men to them that they may carry them up to Jesus. And at last he will give their bodies too. When the day of judgment comes the angels will be seen flying forth into all the winds, and gathering the saints together to meet their Lord. And they will take good care not to leave one of the flock behind. Would not you like to be so gathered? to have an angel come and take you by the hand, as you came out of the grave, and tell you he was sent to take you to Jesus and to heaven.

**II. Jesus Owns the Flock.**—It belongs to Him. What He does in bringing the scattered sheep to Himself is not the first thing He does for them. He could not gather them till He had bought them and made them His own; for they were bound to death, and Satan kept them. They were like sheep sold to the knife. Justice, with a great sword, that kills both soul and body, was going to slay them. And they must all have been slain with it, if Jesus had not died to save them.

See what a price Jesus bought His flock with. Christ's people could not be bought with money. Money cannot save souls. The lives of men have sometimes been ransomed by paying a great sum; but not all the gold in the world would be taken in exchange for a soul. Christ bought His sheep, therefore, with blood—His own precious blood. So we read, after the words of the text, 'The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep'. Suppose a poor prisoner lying in jail sentenced to die to-morrow. Outside they have already raised the gibbet on which he is to suffer death. And suppose, while he is expecting to be led forth, one man were to come and say, I will give all the money I have in the world to save you; and another were to say, I will go to the scaffold in your place, which of the two would show the greater love? And if the second man who offered to die in the prisoner's room were a king, how would people wonder! This was what Christ did; and He is King of kings. He found His people prisoners of God's law, for they had broken its good commandments, and were condemned. The law said they must die. And Jesus said, No; the law is right and must have its due; but I shall die in the stead of my sheep, and they shall live. And the law was pleased and satisfied. And as His reward for saving them the sheep are all Christ's own. He got them

from the hands of justice, and they belong to Him for ever.

**III. He Heals the Flock.**—Sheep, you know, may become diseased, and need to be healed. And all Christ's flock need to be healed of a desperate disease. You know the name of it. It is not fever, it is not palsy, it is not plague; it is worse than them all—it is sin.

When Jesus paid His blood price for His people, He saved them from doom by the very paying of the price. He bought their pardon.

**IV. Jesus Feeds the Flock.**—A shepherd, you know, takes his sheep to the pasture where they may find food. And it is a beautiful sight to see the fleecy sheep scattered over the green meadow, or up on the hill-side cropping the tender grass, while the shepherd watches beside them, and sees them happy. In Eastern countries, and Bible times, this part of a shepherd's work was very important; and sometimes he had to lead his flock a long way to get sufficient food for them. Moses was doing this, as you may remember, and had come to the back of Horeb when he saw the great sight of the bush burning, yet unconsumed.

Now Jesus' sheep need food also. They need food for souls. And He provides it for them. The New Testament says He feeds them with His flesh. But it is a very low and foolish idea that His people should in any sense eat this with their mouths. We do not eat it as we eat the flesh of slain animals. That would not feed the soul. But Christ's sheep feed on the truth about His sacrifice; they eat with the mouth of the soul what the word of God tells them about Jesus' dying for them. They live on His word. They feast on His love.

In Eastern climates, where wells are scarce and water very valuable, interesting sights may be seen at some of the fountains. The flocks of the neighbourhood will be gathered together, and when all are collected the well will be opened and each supplied. Sometimes the shepherds quarrel about this, and fighting ensues. Do you remember any such scenes in Scripture story? Why is a Sabbath school like such a pastoral gathering round the well?

**V. Jesus Guards the Flock.**—The careful shepherd has two things to defend his flock against. He must keep them from the weather and the wolves. When the hot sun shines out with scorching blaze he leads them to the shade; and when the storm howls he takes them to shelter. In our country, shepherds have very toilsome work to do when a snow-storm comes. The sheep will sometimes get covered over in some hollow with the drift, and then it is very hard toil to drag them out and save their lives. Our land is not infested with beasts of prey. You know there is a place in Scotland called Wolf's Crag, because it is supposed the last wolf was killed there. But they are very many and ravenous still in some other countries. In Palestine a shepherd had to guard his flock against wild beasts. You recollect

the story David told about his killing a lion and a bear that had stolen lambs out of the flock.

Now Jesus' people need to be defended. They have many trials and strong enemies. But Christ keeps them so that nothing can hurt them. There is an old fable about a man that a goddess made incapable of being wounded, except in his heel; but the people of God are really invulnerable by any deadly stroke. The storms of affliction will not injure them. The fires of persecution may destroy their bodies for a time—not their souls at all, nor their bodies finally. You recollect how the three Hebrew youths walked in the hot furnace, and got no harm, because the Son of God was with them. Satan, the great roaring lion, will not be able to devour the sheep. Nay, death itself, that seems to swallow them up, only takes them into safe keeping for a little, out of our sight.

**VI. Jesus Leads the Flock.**—Shepherds in our country drive the flocks before them. But in the East they go before the flock. And as they go, the sheep see them and follow. The shepherd, ever and anon, turns round to see that all the sheep keep in the right path. If he sees anyone straggling, he utters a cry that the sheep know. To many of them names are given, and they answer when called on. All this Jesus applies to himself. He leads His people like a flock.

**VII. Jesus Folds the Flock.**—In Bible lands you may see here and there a place in the fields enclosed with a wall all round, with a gate leading into it. Approach it at night and you may see a flock of sheep in it, gathered together for protection during the darkness. That is the sheep-fold. And when I say Christ folds His sheep, I am speaking of what He does with them when the night of death comes. He takes them into a safe place of rest. It is in heaven—a glorious fold to lie down in, where the frost cannot bite, nor the prowler get in. Jesus is there himself. And one by one He is taking His people, old and young, home to it. There was published some years ago a little book called *The Folded Lamb*. Perhaps you have seen it; if not, you can guess what it means. After the night passes Jesus will take His people out of the fold; the bodies of the saints will rise, and all the flock gathered together will follow Him up into the sunny pastures of the heavenly land. And there 'the Lamb Who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 80.

### THE GENERAL RESURRECTION

'I am the Resurrection.'—JOHN XI. 25.

THERE are two thoughts about the resurrection to be remembered; and two lessons from it to be learned: and in both of these we shall see the beauty of the King's work.

*The thoughts and the lessons of the resurrection.*

I. The first thought to be remembered in connection with the resurrection is—that it is **Very Certain**.

And there are two things which show how certain it is. One of these is what God teaches us about it *outside of the Bible*; and the other what He teaches us about it *inside of the Bible*. Outside of the Bible God speaks to us and teaches us many important things. The world of nature around us is like a great book in which God is speaking to us all the time. And there are many things here that seem to speak to us of the resurrection.

*Day and night speak to us about it.* When evening comes, and the sun sets in the west, then it may be said that the day dies. Night is the grave in which the day is buried. And when the sun rises again in the morning it is the resurrection of the day.

*And then the seasons of the year speak to us about the resurrection.* In spring-time the year is young. In summer the year is of age. In autumn the year grows old. In winter it dies. Winter is the grave in which the year is buried. And when spring comes back again, it brings the resurrection of the year. Then the trees begin to bud and put forth their fresh leaves, 'the flowers appear upon the earth, the time for the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land'. And in all these things God speaks to us about the resurrection.

*The insects speak to us about the resurrection.* Here is a caterpillar. He spends his days in going about as a creeping thing. But when he comes to be an old caterpillar, and his crawling days are over, he weaves for himself a cocoon which is like a little coffin. Then he lies down to take a long sleep. It seems as if he were dead. He remains there awhile like a body that has been buried in the grave. But after a long time has passed by that coffin opens, and the worm, or caterpillar, that seemed to be dead, comes out from its little coffin wondrously changed. It is turned into a butterfly. And no king upon his throne was ever so beautifully dressed as he is now. Look at his wings. Did you ever see such brilliant colours? How they glitter in golden glories as he flits about in the beams of the sun! And so every butterfly that we see in the bright summer days is a little minister that God sends to preach to us about the resurrection.

But it is *in the Bible* that He speaks most plainly to us on this subject. Nothing in the world is more certain than that Jesus rose from the dead. But God tells us that it is just as certain *we* shall rise from the dead, as it is that Jesus did rise. If you wish to read what God says on this subject, you will find it in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, from the twentieth to the twenty-second verse: 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' When it says here that 'all shall be made alive,' it means that all shall be raised from the dead.



This makes the resurrection certain. This is enough to settle the matter if there was nothing else in the Bible about it. But there is something else. There is one passage in which Jesus Himself speaks of it. His words are so clear, and so strong, that they should remove all doubt about the resurrection. I refer now to John v. 28. Here Jesus said, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, that the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth'. This makes it so sure that nothing more need be said on this point.

II. The other thought about the resurrection is that it will be **Very Wonderful**.

1. There will be many wonders about the resurrection. The change itself of a dead thing, no matter what it is, to a live one, must always be wonderful.

2. And then the resurrection will be very wonderful too in the way of doing it. As Jesus stood by the grave of Lazarus and called him back to life, so it will be just as if He were standing by your grave, and my grave, and every grave, calling each one by name, to come out from the grave. And every one called will come forth. How wonderful this will be!

3. And then the resurrection will be wonderful in the beauty that will mark the bodies of those who are raised. I cannot tell anything about the bodies of those who are not Christians. But if we love Jesus I can tell just how our bodies will look when they rise from the grave. Suppose that you and I were standing on the top of Mount Tabor, if that was the place where Jesus was transfigured. Moses and Elijah have come down from heaven on a visit to Him. Look, there is Jesus sitting on that rock. And see what a change is taking place in His appearance! His clothing becomes as white as snow, whiter than anybody on earth could make it. His face becomes bright and shining like the sun, only still more glorious! And this is the pattern according to which our bodies will be made at the resurrection, for the Apostle says He will 'change our vile bodies, and make them like unto His own glorious body' (Phil. iii. 25). And in another place we are told that 'when He shall appear, we shall be like Him' (1 John iii. 2). I suppose our bodies will be in size, and shape, and general appearance very much like what they are now, so that we shall know one another as easily as we now do; only all imperfections will be removed, and they will be made to look perfectly glorious. Suppose you have the image of a little man made of iron or clay, and suppose this image were changed to silver or gold. You could tell it in a moment as soon as you saw it. And you would be ready to say, 'Why, only look; here's my old clay image turned to gold! How beautiful it looks!' And when we think how changed our bodies will be at the resurrection, when we think what multitudes of these bodies there will be, when we think of the wonderful way in which this change will be brought about, and of the great beauty that

will mark them, we may well see how wonderful the resurrection will be!

These are the two thoughts we should remember when we think about the resurrection: it is *very certain*; and it will be *very wonderful*. And here we see the beauty of the King's work.

III. And now we come to speak of the resurrection as showing the beauty of the King's work in the Lessons that it Teaches Us.—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 117.

#### THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

'He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.'—JOHN XI. 43.

I. In the Raising of Lazarus we see the 'Pity' of Jesus in His Work.—And this is one thing that shows the beauty of that work.

We read that when he saw the sorrow which the death of Lazarus had wrought upon his sisters, Mary and Martha, 'He groaned in spirit, and was troubled'. Now it must be so that the more we love a person, the more sorrow we shall feel when we see them in trouble. We are told expressly that Jesus did love this family at Bethany, consisting of Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. And when he saw Mary weeping on account of her dead brother, and the Jews also weeping that were with her, His pity was stirred still more deeply; and we read these two short but very touching words—'*Jesus wept*'. These are wonderful words. They show us how full of pity and tenderness the heart of Jesus is. It was so then when He was on earth; and it is so now; for He never changes. And when we are in trouble or sorrow, we may be very sure that Jesus pities us and feels for us.

For me.—Little Carrie was a heathen child about ten years old. She had bright black eyes, curly brown hair, and a neat slender form. After she had been going to the mission school for some time, her teacher noticed one day that she looked sad.

'Carrie, my dear,' said the teacher, 'why do you look so sad to-day?'

'Because I am thinking.'

'What are you thinking about?'

'Oh, teacher! I don't know whether Jesus loves me or not.'

'Carrie, did Jesus ever invite little children to come to Him?'

Immediately the little girl repeated this sweet verse she had learned in the school, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'.

'Well, Carrie, for whom did Jesus speak those words?'

In a moment she clapped her hands, and said, 'It's not for you, teacher, is it? No; it's for me! it's for me!'

Here we see how the knowledge of the pitying love of Jesus was just the thing that drew that dear child to Him for the salvation of her soul. And multitudes have been drawn to Him in the same way, wherever the Gospel has been preached or taught.

And we need to know the tender pity and love of Jesus, not only that we may trust in Him as our Saviour, but also that we may be encouraged to go to Him for help and comfort in all our troubles.

**II. In the Raising of Lazarus we are Told of the 'Prayer' which Jesus Offered.**—And this is the second thing that shows the beauty of His work.

We read in this chapter how Jesus came with those weeping sisters and their sorrowing friends to the grave in which Lazarus lay dead. It was a cave, and a great stone was over the mouth of it. Jesus told them to take away the stone from the mouth of the grave. This was done. There is the great dark cave in which lies the lifeless body of Lazarus. And now Jesus pauses. Before speaking to the dead man in the grave He lifts up His eyes to heaven, and speaks to His Father there. We call this a prayer that Jesus offered. You will find it in the forty-first and forty-second verses of this eleventh chapter. But it is a very remarkable prayer. It is rather a thanksgiving than a prayer. In our prayers we always ask God to do something for us, or give something to us. But we find nothing of this kind here. Jesus does not ask the Father in heaven to raise Lazarus from the dead, nor to help Him to do it. He just thanks God for always hearing Him. He speaks to Him just as you or I would speak to a dear friend who was always with us, to whom we told all our secrets, and with whom we shared all our thoughts and plans and pleasures. Jesus seems to have offered this prayer, or thanksgiving, or whatever we call it, on purpose to show to His disciples, and to the Jews, and to all His people, how entirely united He and His Father in heaven were. They always thought, and felt, and acted as much alike as if they were one person. There are two persons indeed, and yet they are but one God. Jesus was able to do anything that He wanted to do. And yet, when He was going to do anything important, He always prayed to His Father in heaven. Before He ordained His twelve Apostles and sent them out to preach the Gospel, He spent the whole night in prayer. And before He went to meet the great sufferings that were awaiting Him in Gethsemane and on Calvary, He offered that beautiful prayer, more for His people than for Himself, that we find written in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. Jesus prayed in connection with the work He did, not so much for His own sake as to teach us by His example, how to do the work we have to do, and to bear the trials that God puts upon us. When we have hard work to do, and heavy burdens to bear, there is nothing like prayer to make that work easy and those burdens light. Let us look at some illustrations of the way in which great good has been done by prayer.

**III. In Raising Lazarus we see the 'Power' of Jesus.**—And this is the third thing that shows the beauty of His work.

Jesus did many things while He was on earth which showed His power, but nothing did this more

than the raising of Lazarus. When He opened the eyes of the blind, when He cleansed the lepers, and healed the sick, and cast out devils, He was showing His power. When He walked upon the sea as on dry land, and when He hushed the angry storm to instant stillness by a word, He was showing His great power. But the raising of Lazarus showed His power more than anything else He ever did while he was on earth. Lazarus had been dead four days. For four days his body had been as cold as marble; for four days the blood in his veins had stopped flowing; for four days the heart had ceased its beatings, and had been still; for four days his spirit had left the body, and had been in that unseen world, where the souls of men go to when they die. But when Jesus stood by the open mouth of that dark grave and cried out—'Lazarus, come forth,' all that death had done to that buried man was undone in a moment. The cold body grew warm. The blood in his veins that had dried up and stopped flowing became liquid and began to flow again. The still, quiet heart which had ceased its beating, and had been standing still for four days, began to beat once more. And the spirit of Lazarus, away off in the world of spirits, heard the call of Jesus. In a moment it came flying back, and once more entered that dead body which had so long been its home before. And Jesus did all this by His own power.

*Helped through a dream.*—The late Rev. Dr. Bushnell, a well-known minister of New England, used to tell this story about a remarkable dream, and said he knew the story to be true. He had a friend living in the Far West who had been for many years, like Nimrod, 'a mighty hunter'. His name was Captain Young. He was a kind of patriarch among the hunters in that part of the country. He was well known, and was greatly loved and respected.

One night the old hunter had a strange dream. He dreamed that he saw a company of emigrants overtaken by a snow-storm in crossing the Rocky Mountains, and perishing from cold and hunger. He had so clear and distinct a view in his dream of the place where these people were that he could have drawn a picture of it when he awoke. One thing that he saw in his dream made a particular impression on his mind; this was a tall, perpendicular cliff of white rock that lifted itself up into the sky near where these people were, and which had a very peculiar appearance. In his dream he saw the men cutting off what appeared to be the tops of trees, and struggling to get out of the deep gulf of snow. He saw the very looks of the persons in the snow, and noticed what great distress they seemed to be in. When he awoke he was greatly surprised. It seemed so much like a real scene he had been looking at that he could hardly believe it was only a dream.

Presently he fell asleep and dreamed the same dream over again, precisely as he had seen it before. In the morning he could think of nothing else but this strange dream.

Going out after breakfast he met an old friend,

who like himself had been a hunter in former days, and was well acquainted with the pass across the mountains, known as the 'Carson Valley Pass'. He told him about his dream, and described what he had seen in the dream, and especially the tall, perpendicular white rock. His friend told him that he recognised the place from his description of it, and then told him in what part of the pass he would find that singular looking rock. Captain Young was a Christian man. He believed what the Bible teaches about the providence of God. He felt satisfied that there were some people up among the mountains in distress, and that this was the means God was using to have help sent to them. He began at once to collect a company of men, and to send them up into the mountains with mules, and blankets, and necessary provisions. His neighbours laughed at him. 'Laugh away,' he said, 'as much as you please. I am able to do this; I have made up my mind to do it, and I will do it, for I am sure this dream comes from God.'

The men were sent into the mountains a hundred and fifty miles distant, directly in the heart of the Carson Valley Pass. There they found scenery answering to what the captain had beheld in his dream. The tall, perpendicular white rock was there, and there they found a company of travellers overwhelmed by the snow, just as the captain had seen in his dream. Some of them had already perished, but the rest were relieved and brought safely back by the help of the good captain had been led to send them, in consequence of that remarkable dream. Jesus has power to work in this way, and this power makes His work seem beautiful.

Let us learn to pity those in trouble as Jesus pitied them. Let us pray for them as Jesus prayed. And though we cannot exercise the same power that He exercised in doing our work, yet we may be sure that that power will help us, and will protect and bless us, as we work for Him. And so we may well say that in the raising of Lazarus we see 'the beauty of the King's work'.—RICHARD NEWTON, *The Beauty of the King*, p. 95.

### WHY CHILDREN SHOULD BE GLAD FOR CHRIST

JOHN XII. 13.

JESUS once said of children: 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven'. And when He came riding into Jerusalem, it was as the king of that kingdom He came. The people had gone forth to meet Him, and bring Him in like a king. They cut branches from the palm trees and waved them in the air to express their joy. They flung their cloaks and coats on the ground to make a carpet for Him. They went before Him and followed Him through the streets, and up to the Temple, filling the air with their welcome. But when He came to the Temple the children took up the shout and cried: 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

That would be a very sweet sound to Jesus. Jesus

has a great love for children, and their praise is very dear to Him. On the outskirts of the joyful crowd that day were people who did not share the joy, bad men, with scowling faces and hate-filled eyes, whispering hard things against Him, and plotting to put Him to death. But near at hand, moving about His feet, were the children of Jerusalem. And they were crying with all their might: 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

A thousand years before, the great King David had said in one of his Psalms: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength because of Thine enemies'. Our Lord remembered that Psalm in the Temple when He heard the children shouting. There were the enemies with the wicked look in their eyes, with the wicked word on their lips, with the wicked purpose in their hearts. But here were the babes and the sucklings, the children of Jerusalem lifting up their voices in His praise, just as King David had said.

It was the fulfilment of David's word. The children had seen Jesus doing kingly deeds. They saw Him opening the eyes of the blind, healing the lame, and doing other still more wonderful things. And now when He came up to Zion, to the palace of the great King, they said: 'This is the great King Himself—great David's greater Son. Hosanna! hosanna!' The praise was in their hearts, and it rushed up into their lips.

It was also a prophecy of what should be thereafter. In all ages, and in other towns besides Jerusalem, Jesus shall have children who will cry: 'Hosanna' in His praise, and be joyful in Him as their King. In heaven, at this moment, there are multitudes of children who are sending up their hosannas around His throne, and are very glad because He is their King. On earth there are thousands and tens of thousands of children who are learning to take part in this joyful praise. It is the very mark of a Christian child to be ready to cry 'Hosanna' to Jesus, and to be joyful in Him as the King.

It is this I mean to speak of to-day. I intend to mention some reasons why you should take part in these hosannas, and be joyful in Christ as your King. And the reasons are these: First, He is the Saviour of children. Second, He became a child that He might understand children. Third, He is not ashamed to call children His brothers and sisters. Fourth, He is preparing a place for children above.

**I. He is the Saviour of Children.**—It is a great thing for children to have a Saviour. A mother was knitting under the porch of her house one autumn afternoon. Her boy was playing with other children on the village green. Beyond the green was the river, and on the opposite bank of it was a wood full of nuts and berries, and sweet-smelling leaves and flowers, and many other things which children delight to gather. 'Let us cross to the wood,' said some of the bigger children. 'I shall cross too,' said the little boy, whose mother was knitting at the door. The ford was a little to the right, and just out of his



mother's view. There were stepping-stones all the way across. And the little nutting and berrying party got quite safely to the other side. But the clouds had been darkening over the sky since the morning. And now it began to rain. First it came in heavy drops, then there was a peal of thunder, then came down torrents of rain. The bigger children hurried back to the ford, and one by one got over safely. The little boy whose mother was knitting under the porch was last. The river had by this time risen. The stepping-stones were beginning to be covered. The little man took one step, then a second, then he came to a stone over which the river was flowing swiftly, and his heart failed. He wrung his hands with fear, and cried with a piercing cry. The mother heard his cry and flew to the ford. She was too late. She could not reach her child. A broad black flood of water came thundering down between her boy and her. 'My child! my child!' she cried. 'Mother! mother! come for me,' cried the boy. All the village came down to the river-side—men and women, young and old; but no one would venture to cross. They looked and pitied; they looked and wrung their hands, but they gave no help. At that moment a young shepherd, leading his flock down from the mountains, entered the village and saw the peril of the child. He left his sheep on the green and took great strides to the river-brink. The roaring of the water over the stones was terrible, but he heeded not. He stepped boldly from stone to stone. In the centre the flood had carried some of them away; he plunged into the stream. With strong arms he beat the water to the right and left. He pressed his feet against the currents and swam right over to the boy. With one arm he clasped the child, with the other he once more grappled with the flood. There was the roaring of the stream beneath, and the raging of the storm above; but the brave shepherd, partly walking and partly swimming, brought the boy to the bank, and delivered him to his mother.

That was a boy who found a saviour. And what the brave young shepherd saved him from was death. But Christ was the real Saviour that day. It was He who sent the shepherd at the very nick of time. It was He who put the noble willingness into his heart to risk his life for the life of the child. It was He who made him brave and strong to battle with the flood. And every day, somewhere, in this or some other way, Christ is saving children. Death in a thousand forms is continually coming near to children. But by brave swimmers, by faithful nurses, by wise doctors, by loving mothers, by kind friends, and sometimes by the unseen angels, Christ brings deliverance. And He is the Saviour from a death more terrible than the death which threatened the boy of whom I told. It is He who saves from the death which comes by sin—the death of everything good in the soul—the death of the soul itself. Every child born in a Christian home should be joyful in this Saviour. He has saved you from being heathen

children; He has saved you from being slave children. He has come to save you from being dishonest and lying children, and idle and disobedient children. He has saved you from being ignorant of God's love. He has come to save you from spending lives without God. He has come to save you from dying without hope of going to God. He has saved you from the grave, for He has purchased resurrection for you. And He came to save you from what is worse than the grave, from being shut out of heaven; for He has made a way for every child who will walk in it, into the eternal family and home of God above.

**II. He Became a Little Child, that He might Understand Children.**—I once heard about a little girl who was just learning to speak. She came up to her mamma, sick and pale, and began in her broken way to tell something. Mamma could not understand. The doctor could not understand. Nurse could not understand. But still the child continued her little tale, and by and by began to cry, because nobody understood. She wished to tell where her pain was, and no one could understand. At last they thought of sending for her playmate—a child not much bigger than herself. She understood at once. It was the same cry which the Shunammite's little son cried long ago, when he was struck by the heat, 'My head, my head'.

Jesus became a little child to understand all your cries. He was hot and cold, He was sick and well, He was hungry and thirsty, just as you have been. And He had to learn to read, just as you had, beginning with the alphabet.

He knows all about children. He felt all that you feel; He thought just as you think. When He was hurt, He cried; when He was sad, He wept. He had to obey His mother just as you have. Every day He met with other children, with good children, and with children not good, just as you do. And He learned to be a good boy, and to seek good; and He grew up in favour both with God and man. He knew that He had a Father in heaven who could hear His cry; and He prayed to that Father. Before He was twelve years old He made it known that His Father had given Him a work to do. When His mother found Him in the Temple with the priests, putting questions to them, He said, 'Knew ye not that I was about my Father's business?'

He knows how weak children are; but He knows also how strong their helper is, and how willing He is to help them. When a boy or girl says, 'I cannot live as God wants me to live. I must sometimes have my own way, and sometimes I may tell a lie,' the Lord Jesus knows that that is not so. He was a child, and lived as God wished Him to live. And He never uttered a word which was not true.

At the same time, He does not forget that children cannot serve God in the very same way very good grown-up people can do. He remembers how it was with Himself when He was young; and how hard a battle He had. He knows how little you know yet,

and how little you have, and how little you are. And He does not expect you to pray to Him just in the very way your parents do. And He is not angry if your prayers are simple and short. And He does not expect you to work for Him as big people do, but only as children can. He knows your frame, and remembers that you are just children still.

Ah! if you knew it aright, there is nothing better than this in the world for you. Up in heaven, there is One who understands all you think and say. When you are not able to tell your wants, He knows without telling. When you cry in broken words which even your mother cannot understand, He understands. He knows and feels every pain you have. He knows all your sorrows when you are in tears. Even the cries of the tiniest baby in a mother's arms go up into the ear of that dear Saviour who was a tiny baby Himself, and sobbed and smiled in the arm of His mother Mary in Bethlehem long ago.

'Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.'

**III. He is not Ashamed to Call Children His Brothers and Sisters.**—There are many reasons which might well make Jesus ashamed to call boys and girls His brothers and sisters. He is perfectly holy; they are far from being perfectly holy. Some have bad tempers; some are rude; some are quarrelsome; some are disobedient; some are slothful; some forget to thank God for His mercies, or pray for His help.

But the Lord Jesus is not ashamed of them. He says to children, 'Ye are my brethren'. He thinks of children every day as His brethren. And every day He blesses them as brethren. He makes no difference. He loves poor children and rich children alike; and happy children and unhappy; and black children and white. Those who have parents, and those who have lost their parents, they are all His brethren. There is not a poor message boy on the streets, nor a poor newspaper boy, nor a poor foundry boy, nor a poor sailor boy, nor any poor girl, nor any girl or boy, rich or poor, in the wide world to whom He is not a brother.

Do you remember when He called His disciples 'brethren' for the first time? It was after His Resurrection—after He had endured the cross, and won the crown. It was when He was on the other side of the grave, and was waiting to go up to heaven. He said to Mary, 'Go and tell my brethren that I have risen, and that I am going back to God'. Think of the loving-kindness of that message. It was sent to the men who had fled from Him in His sorrow. It was sent to Peter, who denied Him with oaths and curses. Although they had been ashamed of Him before men, He was not ashamed of them. He called them brethren. There is nothing in all the Bible more beautiful than that. And it is just the same thing He says to you, 'Ye are my brethren'. Even to those of you who have been ashamed to pray to Him; even to those who have fled from Him like the disciples, He says, 'Ye are my brethren'. He says that, in order to make you

His true brothers and sisters. He says that, because it is in His heart to be a brother to each of you.

Lift up your hearts to God and be very thankful. You and I have a brother in heaven—the best, the kindest in the whole world. In the high heaven, where the stars shine, and the throne of God is set, this brother lives; and He is Lord of these stars, and He sits on that throne. This is the king who is continually travelling about His kingdom, and doing good to His brothers and sisters. He is near to us when we do not see Him. He is near to us now. Oh, wonder of wonders! My little brothers are king's brothers, my little sisters are king's sisters! When I enter the school, when I go among children by the fireside, I go into the midst of brothers and sisters of the King of Glory.

Nobody need go without this joy. Christ is brother to us all. We may have no money, nor fine clothes, nor books, nor food; but we all have, and we always have, this brother.

Nothing can take Him away from us. Death may take our earthly brothers and sisters, and our fathers and mothers, but it has no power over Christ.

Health and strength, and friends and joys, may leave us; but this brother will never leave you, and never, never forsake you.

**IV. He is Preparing a Place for Children Above.**—Some friends called on me lately who were going to Australia. I said to one of them, 'Do you feel very dreary?' He replied, 'I have a brother there'. That took away the dreariness. It would be a very sad thing to look forward to the end of life if we had no knowledge of a Brother in the life beyond. The ending of life is like leaving one's native land for Australia. The ship goes out of the river, the sea widens, the land disappears; you will never look on those hills and shores again. But there are better hills and shores in heaven. And Christ, our Elder Brother, is there before us. He will come out and meet us, and take us to our home.

In this world there are many things that are very sad. Our life is full of partings. It is like the breaking up of a school, when the top boys and girls are not to return. Perhaps they will never see each other on the earth again. One will go to India, one to Australia, one to London, one to the grave. So are the children of God scattered in the world. They do not know each other; often they do not see each other. One is abroad, one is at home; one is poor, one is rich. A thousand things divide them. How joyful to think that it will not be always so—that the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for them above, and that at the end of the world, He will gather all His brothers and sisters into one happy home in heaven.

There is just this one sad thought that comes creeping into one's mind. Some boy may be saying to himself: 'That joy is not for me; I have not been the brother to Christ I ought to have been'. And some tender-hearted girl may be thinking, that

she has not loved the Saviour enough, nor tried enough to please Him.

This is the blessing of having Christ for a Saviour. There is forgiveness with Him for those who have done wrong. He is waiting to forgive you, and make you as good as you ought to be. You remember the story of Joseph—the brother who was put down into the pit, and sold for a slave into Egypt? The brothers who sold him happened, years after that, to be famishing for food, and went to Egypt to buy corn. And, lo! they found the brother they had sold a great lord there. He did not put these wicked brothers to death. He had pity on them, and blessed them, and gave them corn, and told them to go back for their father, and their wives and their children, and he would prepare a place for them in Egypt. He forgave them all their sin.

Christ is our Joseph. He is Joseph to all the children of men. Can we ever forget the treatment He received at the hands of men in Jerusalem? He came into that city which was His own, and the citizens received Him not. They mocked Him, and beat Him, and sold Him, and crucified Him.

But His heart is none the less the heart of a brother. There is forgiveness and mercy in that heart for every child of man. Even for those who crucified Him He cried: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Oh, that every boy and girl before me would cry for that forgiveness! Oh, that you would turn to other boys and girls, and say: 'We have found the forgiving Brother, whom wicked brothers sold and crucified in Jerusalem long ago. He is the King of heaven. He is preparing a place there for all who love Him. Let us live to Him whilst we are here, and at last we shall go up together and dwell with Him for ever and ever.'

There is one of the Psalms in which everything that lives is called on to join in the hosanna to Christ—sun and moon and stars; fire, hail, wind, and snow; hills and trees; and beasts, wild and tame; and human beings—

Both men and virgins young,  
Even young and old,  
Exalt His name, for much His fame  
Should be extolled.

And everything that lives—in its own way—sends up praise to Christ. The singing of birds, the glad gambolling of little creatures in the woods, the rippling of waves on the beach, express their praise. Winter and summer, spring-time and harvest, are the four-part song of the year. Every season has its own song. In the harvest, the very earth seems to take up the praise. The fields are waving with ripe corn, its pastures are clothed with glad flocks, there is a stir and movement of joy in the very air. The little hills rejoice on every side. The whole wide earth, lying in the light of harvest sun and moon, rejoices before God, who made its bosom fruitful, and ripened the wheat and the barley, and turned the little blades of spring into the yellow waving fields of harvest.

Oh, you children of the Christian Church—you who have been born in this Christian country, and have been blessed with Christian parents—you who can read the Bible, and the sweet story of Christ's love to man—what joy and praise should ascend from you!

If the little hills are glad because God's lambs are bleating on their side; and the green fields because the cattle He made are browsing on their pasture; if the valleys are glad because the corn is waving on their breast, and the whole earth because He has not left it to be a barren wilderness—there are a thousand better reasons why *you* should be glad for Him, who came from heaven to die for you, and went back to heaven to prepare for you a home.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 237.

### JESUS CHRIST GOING INTO JERUSALEM ON PALM SUNDAY

JOHN XII. 13.

THERE are two names for this Sunday. One is 'Palm Sunday,' another is 'Hosanna Day'. A long time ago, the old Christians used to call this 'Hosanna Day'. A nice word! What are the two words? 'Palm Sunday' and 'Hosanna Day'.

Do you know what 'Hosanna' means? 'Save now.' In the 118th Psalm, and twenty-fifth verse, you will find it. In the Hebrew it is 'Hosanna'. 'Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord.' Then, in the next verse, 'Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord'. We call it 'Hosanna Day,' because all the people, and the little children, cried 'Hosanna! Hosanna!'

Why do we call it 'Palm Sunday'? Because the people carried palms.

Let me tell you a little about the palm-tree. It is a very tall tree. And so we read in the fourth chapter of Judges that 'Deborah dwelt under a palm-tree,' because it is so tall. There were a great many palm-trees in that country, particularly at Jericho. And therefore in the thirty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, Jericho is called 'the city of palm-trees'. Perhaps the people got their palms from Jericho.

It is a very beautiful tree. Some say that it is called 'the palm-tree' because the leaves are like the palm of your hand; and you know the fruit of the tree is called 'dates'; and some say that the reason why the fruit is called dates is because the Greek word for finger is '*Dactylus*,' that is 'a date'. So that the tree is called 'palm' from the palm of your hand; and the fruit is called 'dates' because the Greek word for finger is something like dates.

It is so beautiful a tree that, in the ninety-second Psalm, it is said of the righteous, 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree'.

Now I want to tell you a little about that. I have read in a great many books—and I believe it to be true—that, unlike every other tree, the palm-tree grows best if you press it down. The more pressure you put upon the tree the more it bears. Do you see what is the meaning of that? 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.' When do the Lord's



people do best? When they have something pressing upon them—some trouble? I think so. It helps them to bear fruit.

That is what I have got to tell you about the palm-tree. It is a very grand tree. It seems to tell of victory. It was always used to speak of victory.

I. 'He sent two of His disciples.' We do not know who they were. Do you guess? Perhaps it was the same that He sent after to get ready the room, Peter and John; and He told them to go into the village: and what should they find? 'An ass tied, and a colt with her.' Did Jesus see that colt, do you think, at the moment when He spoke? Did He know all about it? What did He say about it? Did He say it should be loose, or tied? 'Tied.' Should it be one that people had ridden on before? 'No.' He knew all about the little colt, and He told them to go and bring it. And what were they to say if anybody stopped them? 'The Lord hath need of them.'

And that is exactly the message God has sent me to give to you. I come to you, and I say to you, 'The Lord has need of you'. It will make Jesus happier if you come to Him. He has something for you to do. 'The Lord hath need of you.' It seemed very wonderful that the Lord should want the colt. And it is very wonderful that He should want any little boy or girl here. But He does; He does. He wants you in heaven with Him. He would be happier in heaven with you there.

The disciples went. Did they find it all just as Jesus had said? 'Yes.' Whereabouts was the colt—at the beginning, middle, or the end of the village? 'The beginning.' Was it tied? 'Yes.' By what? 'By the door.' Was there anything said about the roads? It was 'in a place where two ways met'. There was a door, and the colt was 'tied by the door'.

II. Why did Jesus ride 'an ass' at all? Who prophesied it? Zechariah. Look at the ninth chapter and the ninth verse. Let us read it together. 'Behold thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.' If Jesus Christ had come in a warlike way, come to fight, would He have ridden an ass? 'No.' What would he have ridden? 'A horse.' Then do you think it means He came peaceably? 'Yes.'

Did Jesus Christ generally ride? 'No: He always walked.' Yet it says, 'He rideth upon a swift cloud'.

Was it a disgrace to ride 'an ass'? Was 'an ass' an honourable animal? 'Yes.' Do you always treat it so? Where in the Bible is it called honourable? Where is it made the mark of being noble to ride upon a particular kind of ass? It is in a woman's beautiful song—Deborah's song. What is said of the great people? 'Ye that ride on white asses.' Therefore it was no disgrace to ride an ass! It was a great condescension in Jesus to ride anything—a camel, an elephant, a horse, or an ass. But it was no particular condescension to ride an ass more than any other animal, because the Jews did not hold the

ass as anything mean. But I think it means that Jesus came peaceably. Therefore He came 'riding upon an ass'.

III. And many people were present. Was there any cause for this? Was it prophesied that there should be a great many people to meet Him? 'Yes.' Because He had raised Lazarus—therefore the people met Him. And Jerusalem was very full, because it was the feast of the Passover. Crowds met Him.

And what did they carry in their hands? 'Branches of palm.' And what did they sing? 'Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!' So He went in triumph along.

Did He have a little river to cross? 'Yes.' He passed a small river, called 'the Kedron': He went through the valley of Jehoshaphat, and up a steep hill, and so wound His way round to the Temple of Jerusalem.

Did He go along without stopping? 'No.' Did he stop? What for? About a fig-tree. He stopped also for a strange thing. He stopped to cry; He stopped to weep! More than He did at the grave of Lazarus? Yes; there He shed tears; but now He 'wept'. It is a very strong word. What made Him weep? When He just got in sight of Jerusalem, and thought of its wickedness, and all the trouble coming upon it! Do you remember His beautiful words? 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' He wept over the city; even in His triumph, He stopped to weep over the wickednesses and sorrows of the Jews.

IV. Would you like to have carried a palm on Palm Sunday in Jerusalem? 'Yes.' Can you do it now? 'Yes.' How? Think. What can you do to be like, quite as good, as any child who carried a palm and cried 'Hosanna'? Shall I tell you of four things?

If any boy conquers himself, really conquers himself,—if you want some naughty thing or other, and conquer the desire, you may cry 'Hosanna!' You have got a palm—you are a conqueror; you have conquered yourself. If you have tried to overcome some bad temper, some evil habit, you will be a conqueror; for God will help you to do it, if you ask Him; and then you can carry the palm and cry 'Hosanna! I have conquered'.

Shall I tell you another thing? Supposing you do really love Jesus Christ, and feel Him to be your own dear Saviour, and you like to sing of Him, you like to praise Him, you feel happy in thinking about Jesus, and praising Him, then you are carrying a palm, and you are saying 'Hosanna!' just like these children.

I will tell you another thing which, I think, is still better, if possible. Supposing you do something to help Jesus to ride on in His kingdom; to help on His kingdom. If you are useful to somebody—useful

to another boy or girl, do something to extend the kingdom of God—then you are like the children in the streets of Jerusalem—helping Jesus to ride on in His glory; as in that beautiful forty-fifth Psalm: 'Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness.' If you do anything for the missionaries, for the kingdom of Christ, then you are crying 'Hosanna!' and carrying a palm!—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### DESIRING TO SEE JESUS

(For Epiphany)

'Sir, we would see Jesus.'—JOHN XII. 21.

THOSE are just the words that I should like every one of you to say now, 'I want to see Jesus. I want to see Jesus.' I am going to talk about what we shall do if we want to see Jesus.

I dare say you will guess why I took that text. Do you know why? Because yesterday was Epiphany. Therefore, I took that text. 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'

So we have just begun a New Year, and if you were all little Jews, what do you think you would do? Do you know? Do you know what you would do at the beginning of the year? You would have a feast, and the feast would be called 'the feast of trumpets'. There would be a great many men blowing trumpets. So they begin the year with blowing trumpets. Now what did that mean? Why did they blow trumpets? Well, trumpets show we are going to fight; trumpets show we are going to get the victory; trumpets show we are going to be very happy. Three things—battle, victory, joy.

Now we have not got trumpets to blow with, but we are going this year to fight a battle. Do you know with what? *With what?* With ourselves; to fight against ourselves; to fight our naughty sins. We are going to fight, and we are going to get the victory, aren't we? We shall get the victory if we go the right way to work, and then we shall be very happy and have joy, and so we shall be able to blow the trumpets. Battle, victory, joy! So we begin the year!

Now I am going to talk about the Epiphany. 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' The word Epiphany is a Greek word. It is almost the same word as manifestation. It means showing, *showing*. And you know in the Greek language they never use the word Epiphany except in this sense: God showing Himself to man. God showing Himself to man. Epiphany—God showing Himself to man.

They say that the day of Epiphany was also afterwards the day of Christ's baptism. The Roman Catholics all believe that. The day on which Christ was baptised; therefore they make it a great holiday. Not only on that day because He showed Himself to the wise men, but because He was also baptised on that day; it is a great day, a great holiday.

Now, let us think about the wise men seeing the

little Baby. I cannot tell you how many the wise men were. I cannot tell. They say there were three, but we do not know that. I believe the reason why it is said there were three is because there were three gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Therefore, it is said there were three men. And some say they were kings, but we do not know that. The reason it is said they were kings is from a verse in the sixtieth of Isaiah; if you like you can look at it. It is a verse which makes us think they might have been kings. 'And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising.' It only rests upon that verse. If they were not kings, they were magi, or wise men; and those were the men that first saw Jesus, who first came from the East to see the Babe Jesus. These wise men were Gentiles; that is to say, they were not Jews. Jesus first showed Himself to Jews. The first who saw the little Baby were Jews. Do you know who they were? The shepherds. The shepherds to whom the angels came by night. They were Jews. Then came the Gentiles. And that is the way God has always acted. He has given first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Do you know how we come to have any blessing? Because all the promise was made to Abraham and Abraham's family afterwards. Only to him! Then how can we have any promise? Are we Abraham's family? are we Jews? No. Then how can we have any promise? Jesus was Abraham's seed, and if we are really Christians we are joined to Jesus; we are in Jesus; we are members in Jesus; and so we come to all the promises. And that is the only way by which we can take any promise in the Bible. If we are in Jesus, who came from Abraham—and all the promises went to Abraham and Abraham's seed—we come into the promises by being joined to Abraham; and we are joined to Abraham if we are members of Jesus Christ. So Christ Himself first appeared to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. First to the shepherds, and then to the wise men who came from some distant place.

Where did they come from? We do not know. Some say they came from Arabia, and the reason is because it is in the seventy-second Psalm and the tenth verse. That is a verse which makes some think it shows they came from Arabia—the tenth verse of the seventy-second Psalm. 'The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba'—which is Arabia—'shall offer gifts'. But it is more likely that they came from somewhere about Persia, or in that neighbourhood; and the reason why we think that is because that is near where Balaam was, and he prophesied about the star coming. He said the star should come. A great Roman writer, Tacitus, said there was a great expectation about that country that Christ was coming, and it is thought the wise men came from that neighbourhood—exactly from the East of the Holy Land. It does not matter very much where they came from. They came, these men—perhaps three; we do not know;—they came from somewhere in the

East to see the Babe Jesus. What made them come? They had heard of Balaam's prophecy. I think they lived in that country, and so, when they saw some very strange star, they thought this showed that the Christ was come. They saw the star!

What are stars? There are two kinds of stars—planets and stars. Planets shine by reflection; stars shine by their own light. That is the difference between stars and planets. What are stars? Do you think a little child was right when he said they were 'peep holes into heaven'? I do not think quite that, but I do think when we are looking at the stars we may think about heaven. Another person has called them 'the poetry of the skies'. It is a pretty name for them, 'poetry'. But I should think the star which the wise men saw in the East was not exactly like a star or a planet. I should think it is what we should call a meteor; something that would move, that looked like a star, the same as a star in appearance, but was really only a meteor. Such as you may have seen; a thing that moves about. They saw this, and they had it in their minds to think that that star would lead them to see Christ; would lead them the right way. I don't know whether you know; do you know this? you cannot see the stars in the daytime, but if you were to go down to the bottom of a well or a pit you would see the stars. If you could go down to the bottom of a well you could see the stars at twelve o'clock in the day, because it is dark there. You only see the stars in the dark. This star, whatever it was—like a star—led the wise men to see their Christ, their God.

In Portugal, Don Pedro, a great king, had this as his motto. He had a star upon anything he had, with words, in Latin, which meant, 'It shows the journey'; 'it shows the way'. Therefore it was the motto of the King of Portugal, 'It shows the journey; it shows the way.'

The three men set out, following this star or meteor, whichever way it would lead them, without pointing which way, but they knew it would lead them to see this great Person who was on the earth, and whom they had in their minds.

Now it is very difficult to be sure how it was, but I think it was this way. I think the star in the sky went on before them at first, but when they got in a straight road to Jerusalem, then I think the star was hid, because every one could find their way to Jerusalem. It was hid; but when they came to Jerusalem, and had to go to Bethlehem, they did not know their way till it shone again, and it is said, 'When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy'. They saw it again at Jerusalem. So the star led them wherever they wanted leading; when they could go by themselves they did not want the star. So when they came to Jerusalem it showed itself again, and it showed them the way to Bethlehem. Bethlehem means 'the house of bread'. It is really the house of the living bread to us; where Jesus Christ, the living bread, came to us. And then they came to see the Baby. How old the Baby was

we are not told. They came to see the Baby! Now when a little baby comes into the house, when a little baby is born, everybody wants to see the baby, everybody would like to see it first; but, as I said, it was first shown to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. Oh, what a wonderful Baby it must have been! and though it only looked a baby that Baby was God. Wonderful Baby! I wonder how it looked! I wonder how Jesus looked! I do not know whether He was beautiful, as people call beautiful. He looked so sweet and tender and loving. I think the Baby had that true beauty. They saw the Baby.

You know they say that Turks (you know the Turks are Mohammedans) and the Mohammedans go frequently, some of them once a year, to visit the tomb of Mary—they go to Mecca. And it is told of some Turks that they went to see the tomb of Mary, and when they had seen the tomb of Mary they were so delighted to have seen it that they put out their own eyes that they should not see anything else again. They thought they would not see anything common afterwards. They put out their own eyes because they would not see anything common after they had seen the tomb of Mary. That was very foolish; but they thought that everything else was not worth looking at.

They saw the Baby! Now what I want to ask is, How shall we see Jesus? How shall we have an Epiphany? How shall we see Jesus? Can you think with me how we are to see Jesus? What shall be our star? What is the star to lead us to know Jesus? Will you look at the thirty-second Psalm and the eighth verse? I find there what I wish to say. The first thing I should say in order to see Jesus. The end of the eighth verse, 'I will guide thee with Mine eye'. What is our star then? God's eye, God's eye. The eye of God, 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' As the star guided the wise men, the eye of God will guide us the right way to find Jesus, to find truth. God's eye! Think that God is looking at you. Think where He looks and likes to look. Where He likes to look, there I must go. God's eye! 'I will guide thee with Mine eye.' Think, think! The eye of God! where it looks. Go that way, where God's eye loves to look.

In the great battle of Prestonpans, the great General MacGregor was dreadfully wounded. While General MacGregor was leading on the troops they fought bravely; but when their General was wounded, almost dead, they flagged, they became afraid, and did not fight well, and General MacGregor, though dreadfully wounded, lifted himself up a little off the ground, and cried, 'Men, my men, I can see you still. My eye is upon you; my eye is upon you.' He bid them fight bravely, and they won the battle. MacGregor's eye was upon them; they fought so well, and they gained the victory. Wouldn't it make us fight well if we had God's eye always upon us? Wouldn't it make us love Jesus?

The next thing to guide us is the Bible. The Bible is a guide to us. Then it depends on how



we read our Bible. It is said of a celebrated man that he always read the Bible aloud. It is beautiful to read the Bible aloud. At every verse he read, it was as if he had just discovered a bit of gold. He read it with such feeling, as if he had just found some great treasure. He read it so feelingly. You know David says, when he read the Bible, he felt it was beautiful; he drew in his breath as if he had seen something beautiful. Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful! Is the Bible like that to us? Like a bit of gold, or something beautiful indeed, which makes me draw in my breath and wonder. If you were trying to see something or another in a dark room, what would you do? Wouldn't you go to the window to get a little more light? When you are reading the Bible get a little more light. Go to the windows; go to the windows of heaven, and get more light; and if you read your Bible in that way, I am sure your Bible will be a star. It will be a bright light to you, and show you the way to Jesus.

I will tell you another thing. I said you must think of God's eye, and your Bible; now a third thing—think, think, think! A young man asked a very great philosopher—a very clever man—how he would be able to live a good life, a sensible life; he did not mean a religious life. He asked what book he should take with him; and what book do you think the philosopher told him he should take with him? It was not the Bible. It was a book upon which there was nothing. Merely white paper. A book of white paper. Wherever you go, whatever you observe, whatever you hear, write down in your blank book. That will make you observe everything, and you will find by writing down what you see and hear that it will give you wisdom and guide you in life. Take a blank book and write down what you see and hear. So I say think, think. You must have God's eye, and have your Bible, but you must think. You won't find the way without it.

Which is best, reason or faith? You must have both. You must be very reasonable and thoughtful, and have faith. Reason won't do without faith. You must trust. They say that one day Reason and Faith set out together to take a journey; and they came to a mountain and Reason said, 'I cannot climb that mountain,' and Faith said, 'I can'. They came to a river, and Reason said, 'I cannot go through that river,' and Faith said, 'I can'. And what do you think was the end of it? Faith had to carry Reason on his back, and a very heavy load it was. He had to carry him on his back. Let Faith carry Reason, and you will get Jesus.

One thing more—but perhaps I ought not to say this—your ministers and your teachers are stars; do you know in the Bible we are called stars? You know I am called a star, not that kind of star which shines in his own light, but a reflective light. Do you know where it is said your minister is a star, and your teacher is a star? In the first of Revelation and the twentieth verse. John is speaking of that wonderful Being who 'had in His right hand seven stars'. The

seven stars are the angels; that means ministers. 'The seven stars are the angels'—the ministers. Though I am a poor, miserable, sinful man, yet if I am a minister of God He shines upon me, and I must shine upon you. So I am a star.

These altogether are stars; not one without the other. There must be God's eye, there must be the Bible, you must think, there must be faith, and you must look to your ministers and teachers. If you do that, you will have a star which will guide you to Jesus. You will see Jesus.

Only remember this in your journey. Now you are going on a journey you know to find Jesus. You are going to find Jesus. Which way must you look? Down, round, or up? You will never find a star if you look down or round there. You must look up if you would see the star. You must be always looking up. Now I know some boys and girls who are doing the contrary—who wish to be religious but who are always looking into themselves. They look down instead of looking up to God. Look up to God; don't look much into yourselves; don't look much around you on other people; don't look into yourselves, but look up. There is the star up there if you are always looking up.

And I will tell you how God will help you to see this star up there. He will sometimes make it very dark that you may see the star. You will have sickness, or some great trouble; some one you love very much will die. It will be very dark indeed, pitch dark. That is when you may see the star to guide you to heaven, to guide you to Jesus. If you do that you will see Jesus. You will see Him now by faith, and you will see Him by and by just as He is—'the King in His beauty'. But you will see Him now by faith.

Supposing we were all now to shut our eyes and fancy we saw something. Don't you sometimes do so? Shut your eyes and think of something, think of your home. Why, you see it all just as if you were there. There is mother; there is the tea on the table; she is just going to pour out the tea; there is the table, the teacups, the kettle. I see it all. Don't you know that feeling? If you can do that, that is faith—seeing in your mind the thing you cannot see with your eyes. So you will see Jesus and feel Him near. You will see Him presently. Perhaps it won't be very long; it may, perhaps it will, be before the end of this year you will see Him in His beauty; you will see Jesus.

I have only one thing more to say. What gifts did these men bring?—'gold, frankincense, and myrrh'. Gold for the King, frankincense for the God, myrrh for the dying man. Myrrh was used to embalm the dead; therefore it is thought that myrrh was given to show that He would die. Gold, the most precious thing; frankincense, a very fragrant thing; myrrh, a very lasting thing. You must give to God what is very precious, what is very holy, and what is very lasting. Gold, frankincense, myrrh. Gold for the King, frankincense for the God, myrrh for the dying

man. Give three things. What! that you may see Jesus? No, that would be buying Him. Are we to be good that we may be saved? or saved that we may be good? Which comes first? We are saved that we may be good. We see Jesus, we feel forgiven and we are forgiven. We ought to feel that we could give Him everything. Our body which is precious as gold, our soul which is fragrant as frankincense, and our spirit which is the myrrh. You see the three things—the body, the soul, and the spirit. And that is to be our gift to God, because He has saved us, because He has loved us.

We cannot, perhaps, give gold, frankincense, or myrrh; but we can do as a poor Indian did. A poor Indian in North America had heard about Jesus, and he wished to be loved of God; he wished to be saved; and he came to the missionary, and he brought his beautiful belt which he valued very much, and he said to the missionary, 'I will give this belt that Jesus may love me'. The missionary said, 'God won't accept your belt; that won't do'. He went away, and he brought his rifle and some game that he had shot, and said he would give that to God. And the missionary said, 'That won't do; God won't accept your gun and the things you have shot'. He went away, and came a third time, and brought his wigwam. The missionary said, 'That won't do'. And he said, 'I will give Him my wife and my children'. 'That won't do,' said the missionary, 'that won't do.' Then he came a fourth time and said, 'I will give to God the poor Indian himself'. The missionary said, 'God will accept that gift'.

This I hope you will give. Then you will see Jesus, and love Jesus; and when you are looking for Jesus you will see Him. I hope you have followed me. That is the way we are to see Jesus. 'Sir, we would see Jesus.' Follow the star, God's eye, read your Bible, think, follow on and on, and you will see Jesus, and you will be so happy. You will feel, 'I will give Him everything'. I will give Him myself, and have Jesus for ever and ever.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'—JOHN XII. 24.

THOUSANDS and millions of Christians spring up and flourish, because the Lord Jesus was planted like a grain of wheat. As all the beauty and value of the harvest depend on the fact that the kernel had been put into the ground, and had gone through with this process of decay, so will the glorified bodies of God's people, at the last day, be the natural effect of our Saviour's resurrection.

An old man tells a pretty story of himself which explains the text in a very striking way: 'I had a little sister who died when I was but five years old. The grief of losing her sank deep into my heart; and weeks went by before I could be happy in the playroom where we had so often been together, or could endure the sight of her books and toys.

'Often I stole away alone to the churchyard where she lay, and sat for hours near the little mound that covered her pretty form; for I did not feel so lonely when I sat beside her there.

'I had always been a quiet child; but this sore trouble completely took away my spirits, and made me almost ill. At last my parents became alarmed for my health, and proposed to take me to the seaside. I, however, begged so hard to remain near my little sister, and was so unhappy at the thought of leaving her, that they agreed to let me stay.

"Mamma," I said, "you know you told me Teddy would come out again from under that ground—that God was going to raise her up. I want to be here when she comes."

"My boy," my mother answered, "our little Teddy is not coming back just now. God is not ready yet to bring her body out of the ground. He is taking good care of her soul now, and when you die you may go where she is."

"Must I go into the ground, too?" I asked; "and shall I come out all bright like Teddy?"

"Yes, my boy."

"But, mamma, I don't see *how*. How can it ever be?"

'My mother opened her hand, and showed me a little seed, telling me to take it, and bury it in the ground. She said that God meant to have the seed buried in that way, so that it might grow up and produce beautiful flowers, and that the same Great Being could also raise up our friends from their graves, and give them glorified bodies.

'Every day I loitered for hours around the spot where I had buried the seed, and even brought my book and studied my lesson there. I somehow felt that upon the coming up of that plant depended the raising of my little sister—that if my mother's word proved true about the seed, I should have a sure prospect of some day seeing little Teddy again. So I watched and waited anxiously for many days, and the time seemed very long.

'At last, one morning, after a very rainy night, I went out, and saw, to my intense delight, two small green leaves peeping above the ground just where I had buried my seed.

'To this day I can remember the thrill of joy I felt at that sight. It was not merely delight at finding that I was to have a flower of my own; but to my childish heart it seemed like an assurance straight from heaven that my little Teddy would be taken care of, and given back to me again.

'Now I was happier than I had been for many weeks, and as my morning-glory grew and blossomed my trust in God's power grew stronger, till at length all the heavy weight of sorrow was lifted from my heart.'

A graveyard ceases to be a gloomy place when we remember the cheering lessons of Easter. It is God's own garden plot, which will one day bloom and blossom.

And now, one closing thought. If a seed of *wheat*

be sown, *wheat* grows from it; if barley, the crop will be barley. And so, when the Lord Jesus Christ is sowed in the earth, for a seed, *Christians* spring up from Him—those who are like Him, and who try to be true, and gentle, and pure, and good, as Christ was.

As we sing in one of the Easter hymns—

Soar we now, where Christ hath led,  
Following our exalted Head;  
Made like Him, like Him we rise,  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 79.

### GRAFTING AND BUDDING

'I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.'—JOHN XV. 5.

THERE is such a thing as *budding* as well as *grafting*. The gardener takes a little bud, before it has opened, along with a little bit of its stalk, and he cuts the stalk down till he cuts to its heart, and then cuts a little slit in the tree and gets at its heart, and then he puts in the stalk of the bud and ties it firmly round with cord, and puts clay round about the wound; and by and by the little bud gets life from the heart of the tree, and it grows finely. You should try to do this yourself in the springtime; and so, lest you should make any mistake in doing it, let me remind you what you have to do.

I. First you must get to the heart of the bud, and get to the heart of the tree, and you must bind these two very close together.

Yes, yes, that is the way, the only way we can get life from Jesus—we must bind our heart to His heart. It won't do merely to be near Him, it won't do merely to know about Him, it is only when we set our hearts to His heart that we get His life. So if you would know how good He is, and how good He can be, you must love Him with all your heart.

Sometimes it is difficult to get at the heart, and so sometimes God has to *cut down*. You won't know all that that means yet, but one day you may; how God lets sorrow and pain come to us, and we think it is very hard, but by and by we find what He meant—He meant to prepare our heart to be bound to the heart of Jesus. Far better if we do not make that needless. Far better if we bind our hearts to Jesus when we are little. If the bud takes hold of the heart of the tree it grows better than it would have done if it had waited till it was a branch.

II. But the second thing to remember is, you must hold the bud firmly into its place with cord. If you don't do that, when it begins to droop a little, it will fall out. And that is why father and mother say, 'You must'. You must go to church, you must read the Bible, you must learn the text by heart, you must pray to Jesus. We do not like 'must'—it is not the nicest word—but then, the bud does not like the cord that is round about it, but it is the strong cord that saves the bud. And so for the time you must do this, and must do that, as you are told, if you are to

grow right with Jesus. By and by, when the bud has taken hold of the heart of the tree, the cord is taken off—for the bud will now grow beautifully and abide in the tree of itself. And so one day you won't hear any more about 'must,' because you will yourself want to do the things that will please Jesus. Till then, however, remember the cord is needful.

III. And then, in the last place, don't forget the clay. The little bud could not forget it, though I am afraid it rather would if it could. For clay is cold, and it makes everything so dark and sad. Yes, but it is only for a little; when the bud has begun to take hold, little by little it breaks away all the clay from itself.

And it is just the same with you and Jesus. When first you put your heart to His, things sometimes seem very dark and sad. You find out then how sinful you are, how unkind you have been to Jesus, and you are sad, and religion seems a very dark sad thing altogether. Yes, but wait, keep your heart true to the heart of Jesus, and the clay will all drop off. You will rejoice in mercy, you will notice more and more the sunshine God sends to you, and religion will become a brighter thing to you every day. The great thing is—keep your life close to the life of Jesus if ever you would do things that please Him and make yourself happy.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Angel*, p. 49.

### THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.'—JOHN XVI. 13.

We have brought before us at this special season of Whitsuntide one of the greatest of the Bible truths. It is the companion truth to that of Ascensiontide. It is the complement of it. To the thought of the risen life is joined the way to attain unto it. There is no truth in the Bible which has not its practical bearing upon our lives, and we may always be quite sure that whatever God places therein for us to learn He will at the same time provide the means and power to carry out. As, therefore, He tells us to 'set our affections on the things above,' so also He sends His Holy Spirit to lead us and direct us with regard to such things. As He enjoins us to 'Fight the good fight of faith,' so surely He puts within our lives strength for the conflict, and He also places upon us the armour necessary to protect us against the darts of the enemy. It is difficult to see what more God could have done for us. To-day, then, we think especially of the guidance of His Spirit in regard to our life's plan.

I. When our Lord ascended into heaven He left His little band of followers to carry on His work in the world. It seemed at the time a work which was impossible and impracticable. A few fishermen is the material which our Lord uses in founding the great kingdom of God upon earth. As we look at these men, we cannot help wondering at their faith and at their confidence. Round them were enemies on every hand. In open and in secret doubtless the



scribes and elders of the Jews poured ignominy and shame on the name of their ascended Lord. The Romans looked with contempt upon the humble followers of the Nazarene. The Gospel ship seemed indeed among shoals and quicksands, and there was no pilot. But all will shortly be changed. The Heavenly Pilot will come, and soon the Gospel ship will sail far away to the islands of the West, and tell its glad message of 'peace on earth, goodwill to men,' and 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea'. Yes, all would soon be changed. The little band would be augmented by three thousand souls, and henceforth the Holy Spirit would be spread abroad to lead and guide men into all truth.

Surely this is the truth that we want to realise today. We in our lives want to have the ruling and guidance of God's Spirit. We want to remember that we are to partake of the great benefits of Pentecost. Just as the early Church needed constant help and encouragement, so we in our lives are constantly in need of God's spirit to check us, to lead us. We find out this need at every period of our life's journey.

III. School life is filled with many and varied opportunities. There are many perplexities, difficulties, temptations. There are shoals and rocks on which our vessel may be easily wrecked if our Heavenly Pilot be not on board to guide it through in safety. Many a time the rocks are hidden by the waves. Sometimes men speak us fair. We think they are true to us, but, alas! we find that their friendship means our shame, their love our dishonour.

The true love of an honest and true heart is worth everything. David and Jonathan give us an example of this. Let us aim then at this in our school life, and all will be well. In order that this may be so our friendships must, like David's and Jonathan's, be cemented by the love of God. It is this great eternal love which makes the Brotherhood of man possible. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' And thus as we are the partakers of a common Christianity, we are bound together by a chain whose every link is love. If men thus realised their Christian life, the world would assume a different look. Anger, strife, envy, hatred, meanness, uncharitableness, jealousy—all would go, and instead of the works of the flesh, there would spring up in every life the fruits of the Spirit. Will you think of this particularly for a few moments? The works of the flesh which are hidden within the life of every man are the natural result of our fallen nature. Apart from God this fallen nature of ours is incapable of good. We therefore see that all the good that we can do is and must always be the direct fruit of the Spirit of God. As therefore we are led by this Spirit we become the sons of God. Now, shall we apply this more particularly still to our everyday life? There is sin on every hand. Various temptations beset our path. What must we do? How can we stand to the right? We see how to attain this by our text, 'He will lead you into all truth'. As we are willing to acknowledge

God the Holy Spirit in our lives, so He is willing to lead us into whatsoever is true and pure and holy. It is God's work to do this for us. It is our duty to allow Him thus to work. If we suppress the promptings of His Spirit in our lives, we do so to our own peril and ruin. It is impossible for us as true followers of Christ to live day by day in open sin. No fellow who deliberately lives an impure life, whether it be of thought, word, or action, has any right to expect any other fruit than his own destruction. They which do such things *shall not* inherit the kingdom of God. But the Spirit is manifest to lead us into truth. We have again the opportunity of turning towards the light of God's perfect day. Again the Holy Spirit speaks to us, pleads with us, and it is for us to respond by a willing surrender of the life.

III. We are quickened together with Christ if we will, and life at school is filled with that true life which is the direct work of the presence of the Spirit of Christ in our lives. Thus do we in a very real sense realise the meaning of Whitsuntide. But we want to see in some measure how the Spirit works in our lives. This we can best understand by looking at our text, 'He will lead you into all truth'. Here is the purpose, and it is very evident that this purpose could not possibly be attained other than by a gradual process. Just as the seed, when it falls into the furrow, must, before it can reach maturity, be subject to the moisture by night and the sun by day, so, too, in the spiritual life must man be furthered by the Holy Spirit of God.

And as the growth of the seed under these influences of nature is a gradual one, so also is the growth of the Spirit. The leading into all truth is the work of a lifetime, and even then it is not accomplished. We watch the gradual growth in nature. We see first the small green shoot bursting from its brown shell, then comes the leaf, and then the flower and fruit. It is all a very regular and gradual process; each day sees some new development—so surely is man's life under the influence of the Spirit. The soul is conscious of the Divine leading, and in obedience to its dictates it gradually responds more and more to the will of God, and awakens to a more active life and a deeper sense of responsibility. A boy has only a limited sense of responsibility, but as he grows up into youth he necessarily learns more of what is required of him, and he is thus enabled to grasp more firmly the unseen which alone can avail him in surmounting the difficulties of his life. Thus does God lead by His Holy Spirit into all truth, and it will be well for us to consider whither the Spirit leads, viz. '*into all truth*'.

IV. While others are being tossed hither and thither by the storms of doubt and uncertainty, we are led '*into all truth*'; while others are entangled in the web of perplexity, we are rejoicing in the freedom of the Christ life, the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free; while others are on the lowlands, amid the fogs and mists, we are on the highland of God, in the sunshine of God's presence, and breathing in the

mountain air of the life hid with Christ in God; while error rears its head and strives to overturn the simple faith of our Christianity, we are enabled to be true to our calling, and to show to the world 'whatsoever things are true'. We have the truth, and we are led into all truth.

There are many different ways in which the Holy Spirit works in our lives. Sometimes it is the thunder of God's wrath that is needed to awaken a man out of his sleep of death to newness of life. Sometimes it is the sunshine of His love that brings the soul nearer to Him. There are again special seasons of opportunity in the working of the Spirit in men's lives. How often do we realise this? We realise it whenever some great sorrow overwhelms us by its presence. Are we not called in a very special sense to a better and truer life at such times as these? Whenever we see the difficulties of others, whenever we see a life given over to sin, whenever we see a man striving against temptation and overcoming it—in all these things the Holy Spirit speaks to us and teaches us the lessons of life, gradually leading us into all truth.

And then there is the calling to remembrance of past sin, of past temptation, of past difficulty. This is another very real operation of the Holy Spirit. Yes, the Holy Spirit calls to our remembrance the days that are past, and words uttered perchance by one long dead bear fruit after many years.

It is often so in our lives. We hear some message from God to our souls, and it is like the seed sown in the furrow. It does not show itself at once, but after days, months—years perhaps—it brings forth fruit in our lives. Therefore I would leave the thought with you to-night, '*He will lead you into all truth,*' with the full assurance that God will help you to understand it, and to enable you to grasp it practically in your lives.

#### AT THE CROSS: A LESSON OF FILIAL LOVE

'He saith unto his mother, Woman behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother!'—JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

I wish to take you to-day to the most solemn spot on which your feet can stand—to Calvary, that you may learn a lesson from the behaviour of the Perfect Son to His broken-hearted mother.

I. **The Broken-hearted Mother.**—How terrible must have been the trial of Mary's faith as she stood at the cross. It seemed as if the angel had been a deceiver, and God's word a lie, and all the wonders of her son's childhood a dream. This was the sword that pierced deepest. It was very dark round her. She tried to keep hold of God's hand, but it was very difficult. Poor broken-hearted mother!

Yet there was one sword which had pierced many a poor mother's heart which did not pierce Mary's—the poisoned sword. One thing she was able to steady her soul upon; it kept her calm, and made her proud of her son even in this hour. She knew He was innocent: that He was hanging there not

on account of His own deserts, but on account of the injustice and wickedness of others. She knew He had always been pure, and noble, and good. Perhaps through the souls of the mothers of some of you a sword will pass, when they see you dying young of some painful disease, or when you are killed by accident, or lost at sea. But there is one sword which I hope will never pierce your mother's heart. It is the poisoned sword. What is that? It is the anguish which passes through a mother's heart when her boy becomes a wrecked and ruined sinner. It is very sad when a mother sees her young son borne away to the grave. It changes her life to winter. But there is sunshine even in the dripping winter weather, when she knows he is gone to be with Jesus. Most of your mothers, I am sure, would rather see you stretched dead at their feet than hear of you away in some distant city or country living a life of sin.

II. **The Perfect Son.**—But now let us look at Jesus. It is His heart we want most to see. How was He affected when He beheld His mother and her grief? Here is the model for all children—the Perfect Son, the glorification of filial love.

1. *His childlikeness.*—Yes, Jesus was Mary's child still. Not only when He was a little boy at Nazareth, dependent on her care for the supply of His wants, did He love her; but when He became a young man, and worked at His trade and came home to His meals, He still loved her. Aye, and even now, after all His preaching and His miracles, He is still His mother's child, and remembers her. *Amor descendit, non ascendit*, says the proverb; that is, love descends, but does not ascend: the old love and remember the young, but the young forget. But this was not true of Jesus. Mary was faithful to Him, and followed Him with deathless love to the last; but so He remembered her, and had a look and a word for her even now.

2. *His thoughtfulness.*—Mary was a widow; for Joseph, her husband, seems to have been long dead, and she was poor; for Jesus, though He worked to support her, had never been able to accumulate any money. He had nothing to leave her. All He had to leave behind Him in the world was His clothing, and the soldiers got it. But He was anxious about her future support. So He left her the legacy of a new son. He asked John to be a son to her.

He fixed on the most loving of all His disciples to be her new support. What a kind arm would John's be to hang upon! He gave Mary the same loving breast to lean her grey head on as He had been wont to lean upon Himself. Peter would not have been nearly so suitable; he was too headlong and hot-tempered. Then again, John seems to have been the most wealthy, or rather well-to-do, of all the disciples, Jesus did not send Mary into a very poor home where she might be a burden.

Did I not say truly that on the cross Jesus showed him- self the Perfect Son? Look at Him, and learn how beautiful and noble a thing filial love is. Learn to love your mother tenderly, considerately, lastingly;

to carry her image in your mind through life as a charm against temptation; so that she may never have to bow her head with shame on your account, or have her hair whitened by your sins, but be always proud of you, and wear your fair fame as her dearest ornament. Learn to cherish the ambition to be able, when she is old, to make her comfortable, and to smooth the pathway by which, leaning on your arm, she may descend contentedly to the grave. Would you like to be and do all this? Then become the friend of the Perfect Son, and He will make you like Himself.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 64.

### THE WONDERFUL RACE

'So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter.'—JOHN XX. 4.

LAST Sunday, exactly eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, there was a very singular and very beautiful race. I am going to speak about that wonderful race which took place eighteen hundred and fifty years ago last Sunday. The race was run by two great, good men. The name of the one was Peter, and the name of the other was John. Peter and John, or we ought to call them St. Peter and St. John. That is my text—*St. Peter and St. John*. They were very great friends. They were not very like each other, except that they both loved God very much. They were not very like each other. Peter was very eager and impetuous, John was very tender and loving. John was not always tender and loving, but he became very tender and loving. But though they were different they were great friends. I think that if I were to choose a friend I would not choose one exactly like myself. I would rather there was a difference; and I advise you in choosing your friends to choose a friend who will make up for what you want. That will be the best friendship, if one fits in to what the other wants; to supply what you want. That was the case with Peter and John. Peter was very unhappy because he had not done right; he had said, 'I do not know Jesus'. He was afraid, he was ashamed; he must have been unhappy. To whom would you go if you were very unhappy? You would go to somebody who was the most kind and loving person you knew. And therefore Peter went to John, because John was so loving. Therefore we find in the Acts of the Apostles that Peter liked to be with John, because John was so loving. Whom do I know very kind and loving, very good? Do I know any man or any woman, any boy or any girl, who is very kind and loving? Go to that one, go to that one!

**Peter and John ran the Race.**—Now I want to tell you about the race. Who do you think will win, Peter or John? I will tell you about it. That morning Mary Magdalene came very early to the grave of Jesus. She had been last at the cross and first at the tomb. What a privilege! Last at the cross and first at the tomb. And as she was going to Jesus' grave she thought in her mind, 'Oh! but there is that great stone. What shall I do about the

stone?' But when she came to the grave, lo and behold! there was no stone there. It was all gone! The angels moved the stone away. I have sometimes found it so, haven't you? I have thought of something I wanted to do, but I have thought, 'Oh, it is too difficult; there is a great stone in the way'; and lo and behold, when I have gone to do my duty there was no stone. God had taken the stone away and made it all easy. If it is your duty to do it God will make it quite plain, and so He will take away the stone. When she came there was no stone, but an angel outside. And she looked in and saw that Jesus was gone. No Jesus—no Jesus! Well, what was she to do? She ran away to tell the disciples. She ran with the good news. Just what we ought to do when we have got something very pleasant; run and let others hear it, hear the good news. And she ran to Peter and John, and she said Jesus was not in the grave. There was Jesus' tomb and no Jesus in it. Then Peter and John set out on their race. They both wanted to go as fast as they could to see the wonderful thing, no Jesus in the grave! John ran the faster first; he got first to the grave. He did not go in. I wonder why he did not go in? Do you think he felt it awful? Perhaps he did. Then Peter came following; Peter went in and saw all there was there. What do you think he saw? I should like to tell you. He saw the linen clothes with which Jesus was wrapped, folded up, and the napkin neatly folded up. Who did it? The angels. I have no doubt the angels folded up the cloth so neatly and put the napkin so neat and nice. Oh! angels are neat and nice. I have no doubt in heaven all is so neat. It is sure to be. Therefore put everything away quite neat and nice in your box, or in your drawers. Is everything neat? Think of the napkin so nice and neat. When you are folding up a napkin, think of the napkin so nice and neat. The grave of Jesus teaches us neatness. That is what Peter saw. Then John followed, who had waited outside. He went in, 'he went in and believed'. We don't read Peter believed. John went in and believed, believed that Jesus was raised. Who then won the victory? Who got the race? Peter or John? Which? John, certainly, because he believed. Therefore John won the race. John got first and Peter went in, then John went in afterwards and believed. So love won the race. John was love, Love won the race.

Faith is the greatest thing we can have. A little child was asked—'What is faith?' And the little child said, 'Faith is doing what God tells us, and believing what God says to us, without asking any questions.' To believe what God says and to do what He tells us to do and ask no questions about it. To be sure it is all right, because God has said it. Faith is the right thing; that is to trust God.

I remember that once Faith and Reason took a walk. Reason is why you understand everything. One day Reason said to Faith, 'Let us take a walk together'; and Faith said, 'You cannot walk with



me. I can do what you cannot.' Reason said, 'I can do all you can'. Soon they came to a river, and Reason said, 'I cannot spring over that river'; but Faith said, 'I can'. Faith took reason on his back and swam with him across the river. And then they came to a great mountain, and Reason said, 'I cannot climb that mountain'; and Faith, said, 'I can overcome mountains'. So Faith carried Reason over the mountain. Faith can do more than knowledge or reason. Trust in God to-day. 'John saw and believed.' That was the victory; John got the victory.

Now all of us are running a race. There are two places in the Bible where it particularly speaks about this—the first verse of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, and the ninth chapter of the First Epistle of Corinthians. 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' And we may all win. Everybody can win this race. We can all get the prize. And what is our race? We are racing for heaven.

Now what will win our race? Love, love will win the race. I will tell you how. If a person is running a race he ought to keep his eye on the person at the end—the goal. Then he will run best. Not if he looks down at his feet, or around him; but the goal. There is Jesus. I look at Jesus, I love Jesus, and that makes me run well. And so love for Jesus will win the race, just as John won the race. That is our race, and that is the way we are to win the race.

Now in every Christian church there are a great many Peters, and there are a great many Johns. There are some Peters very eager and impetuous, very impetuous; and there are some Johns, loving, tender, and kind. Which do you think you are? I know which will win the race most—the loving ones. Love will do it, love. It says here Love conquereth. The greatest of these is charity, that is, love. Love winneth the victory.

Some time ago I read of a battle where a young man fought wonderfully well. Wherever he went he conquered the enemy, he fought so bravely and nobly. And he was killed after he had won the victory. After the victory was obtained he was killed. And people wondered how it was this young soldier was so very brave, and won such a victory. When they came to look at him they found under his military suit, just close to his heart, a gold locket, and in the gold locket there was a sweet face, such a sweet face, and then they knew that it was the thought of that sweet face of somebody he loved, and whose picture he had got in that locket—it was the thought of that sweet face which had made him so brave. And if you think of the sweet face of Jesus, and love Jesus, you will be a good soldier, a good racer. You will get the victory, you will win the prize. Love is the conqueror. Oh! God gives us all love, love, love; may we love everybody, do everything for love.

Not fear love! Go through the world and love everybody.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### THE GARDENER AND HIS GARDENS

'She, supposing Him to be the gardener.'—JOHN XX. 15.

TRY to imagine what that garden was, in which was the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea. A spring garden; but not at all like the spring gardens which you are used to here in England; none of the flowers to which we are accustomed, no lawns such as we have here, for the grass would soon be parched up. But perhaps a palm-tree or two, throwing their heads high into the air, and making sweet music far above the earth: the tree called the datura, with its broad green leaves, and its flowers like silver trumpets; fig-trees also, with the fruit half ripe and beginning to turn a glossy brown; and above all cactuses, that strange plant which none of our English flowers at all resemble, with its clumsy, huge leaves, an inch thick, carved out as it were in green wood, covered with prickles, and sending forth lovely red flowers on a stalk three or four feet long. These were the kind of flowers which grew round the place where the Saviour of the world had lain.

The Lord's tomb was not like one of our graves dug out of the earth, but scooped sideways out of a rock, like those rocks which you see in Ashurst Wood. A great rock rising up out of the ground such as Isaiah had in his mind, when he spake of the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. To the mouth of this hollow recess the stone had been rolled which now was taken away, and there stood Mary Magdalene, wondering where the Lord's body could be taken.

And then comes the text: when she saw our Lord, she supposed him to be the gardener. Now was that a mistake or not? When Mary Magdalene, who loved our Lord Jesus Christ more than any other loved Him, excepting His own blessed mother, imagined Him to be the gardener, was she right, or was she wrong? Wrong, you will say, quite wrong. The King of kings and Lord of lords, He that was no longer the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but the victorious Monarch who had conquered death and hell, how could He be a poor gardener? And I say that when we come to think, that saying of St. Mary Magdalene, if it be a mistake in one sense, may nevertheless teach us a great truth: how our dear Lord is the gardener. For notice, it does not say, she supposing Him to have been a gardener, but *the* gardener; and the gardener He is; and the gardens over which he watches are our souls; and the different flowers which spring up in them are the different graces which He has planted there, and from which He expects good fruit.

And you remember that in one of His parables He calls Himself by almost the same name. He calls Himself the dresser of the vineyard, who interceded for the barren fig-tree: Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

So that this mistake of St. Mary's was only as it were another kind of parable. Do you remember my telling you, some time ago, of the lilies which were brought to a number of children by their guardian angels, and for the well-doing of each of which each child had to answer? All that comes to the same thing. Every one of your hearts is a garden belonging to God, in which, as I said, He has planted His graces, and He now waits to see what they will bring forth. What graces? And what ought they to bring forth? Love, for example, is one grace; faith is another; hope, humility, patience, cheerfulness, truth, and so on. And what are they to bring forth? Why, if He has planted love there, He waits to see whether you will be ready to do any kind of action to those who need it; whether you are forbearing and gentle with those who are younger or weaker than yourselves, kind to anyone who is sick; above all things not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. This is the kind of fruit which love ought to bear. You know that if I set a rose or a lily in an earthly garden, I can tell you what sort of flower it ought to bear when the time shall come; and so I know that when God has put into your hearts such and such graces they ought to produce such and such effects in due season. If I set a lily in a garden now, I know that by and by there will come up a flower with snow-white leaves, rising high above the ground, and with golden-coloured anthers in the middle. Again, if I set a rose in an earthly garden, I know that by and by that beautiful flower will come up with leaves within leaves of its own lovely colour, and its own delightful smell. So if God gave each of you, as He certainly did, the grace of faith at your baptism, I know also what that ought to bring forth. I know that whenever you are in any kind of trouble or sorrow or vexation, you ought still to believe that it is only a proof of God's love: that you are bound to put all your trust in Him nevertheless; that you are to be sure that He would no more send you this sorrow, unless it were necessary for you, than an earthly parent would give you bitter medicine unless you required it.

Now then the question is, whether our Lord, the true Gardener, does see the graces springing up in you which He expects, and which He has a right to expect. You remember what He says to His vineyard in Isaiah: which He had fenced, which He had planted with the choicest vine, out of which He had gathered the stones: in which He had made a wine-press, and a tower to defend it from enemies; and when it should have brought forth grapes it brought forth wild grapes, which are a deadly poison. You remember how He says that He will break down the fences, and remove the wine-press, and lay it waste; and also, saddest thing of all, that He will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it, that is, that He will send it no more grace. And so if those gardens of your souls bring forth no flowers and no fruit for Him, depend upon it He will take away the privileges you have now.

This is a happy time, this Easter-tide: but to whom? To those only who are trying to rise as their Lord rose—to set their best love, and their best desires, not on the things of this world, but on the things of that blessed place where He now is. It is but little as yet that you can understand of this, very little indeed; but what you do understand that you must try to do. Every child must try as much as every grown person to look upon heaven as their own home, as their own dear home, and every situation here, every place where they live, only as a wayside inn where they rest for a little while, and then go on to their Father's mansions. We call it keeping Easter now; but any earthly Easter is a sad, dark Easter after all: and there is but one true and real Easter, and that is any eternal one in the kingdom of heaven.—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 99.

### LOVEST THOU ME?

'Lovest thou Me.'—JOHN XXI. 16.

I WANT you to answer the question—Do you love Jesus? He says it: 'Lovest thou Me?'

Do you remember about the little girl in the railway carriage, who travelled with a young man who did not know Jesus? They talked together for a long time, and then the little girl looked up into the young man's face and said to him, 'Do you love Jesus?' And this made him begin to think whether he did love Jesus. And that was the way he was brought to know Him. He prayed to God that he might love Him, because the little girl said to him, 'Does 'oo love Jesus?'

I. Now that Jesus asks you, 'Lovest thou Me?' what shall you say? I will try to help you. It is a very difficult question. How shall we know whether we love Jesus? Do you think, now—if there is anybody you very much love, don't you *like to be alone and talk secrets*? Don't you think, 'I should like to sit up all night and talk secrets?' Or if you sleep together, don't you lie awake in the night and talk secrets?

There was a poor man, and he lived in a very poor house, and he could not find a place where he could pray in; and he used to go to the church when it was empty, when there was no congregation, and nobody saw him there excepting the clergyman, and he saw how long he prayed; he was such a long time on his knees in prayer; and the clergyman said to him one day, 'John, how is it you say such long prayers? You seem to have a great deal to say to God. He replied, 'No, sir, I have not a great deal to say, but I like to stay a long time on my knees, for I look then at Jesus, and Jesus looks at me; and so there comes from Jesus to me a little thought, and then a little thought goes from me to Jesus; and so we talk together. Jesus looks at me and I look at Jesus.' He loved Jesus, I am sure. He would not care to go to an empty church, and be a long time on his knees and tell Jesus secrets if he did not love Him. That was one of the signs of his love.

Shall I give you another sign by which you can tell if you love Jesus? Will you remember them? The first is, liking to be alone with Jesus and talking secrets. Now the second thing is, if you have got anybody you love, you like to give them something—*make presents*. What can we give to Jesus? He has everything. What present shall I make my dear friend, my best friend? Can you think?

There was a poor Red Indian in North America and he listened to a missionary, and the words touched his heart. He talked to him about loving Jesus. And the Indian thought much about it, and one day he came to the missionary and he said, 'I want to give Jesus something. Here is my belt—I am very fond of my belt; it is a beautiful belt. I will give Jesus my belt.' The missionary said, 'That won't do'. The Red Indian went away sorrowful. A little time after he came back, and he brought his rifle, and the skins of animals he had shot, and he said to the missionary, 'I give these to Jesus. Won't they do?' 'No,' he replied, 'they won't do.' The man was disappointed and went away again. The third time he came he brought his wigwam—a sort of hut; and he brought also his wife and his children, and he said to the missionary, 'I give my wigwam, and my wife, and my children'. And he replied, 'These won't do'. Then he went away again; but presently he came again, and he brought nothing, and he said, 'Will Jesus take poor Indian man?' The missionary said, 'That will do. That is the right gift. Give Him yourself; give Him your heart!'

11. That is the second way we can tell whether we love Jesus; Do we give Him our heart?

Now I'll mention another thing. If you love anybody you would not mind bearing something for them, some pain, for their sakes; you would rather like it, because it would show that you loved them.

I could tell you a sad story of a little boy, and I believe it's true. I knew his name, but I forgot it, and I could not pronounce it if I remembered it. There were two brothers, one was grown up, the other was a little fellow. There was a terrible persecution when the Christian religion was first brought into Japan, when the missionaries came. The Japanese were very cruel to everybody who said they would not worship their gods; and this elder brother said he would not worship idols any more, but the true God, even Jesus. They treated him cruelly; they cut off his fingers, and they told him they should kill him if he worshipped Jesus. When his little brother saw his poor hand bleeding and the fingers cut off half-way, he said to his brother, 'What a beautiful hand! wounded for Jesus! Would that I could have my hand wounded for Jesus! Perhaps my turn will come!'

And his turn did come! When they heard him talk in that way, finding he was a Christian, they cut his fingers in half. There was a loving boy! he

loved Jesus so much that he called the wounded, bleeding hand 'a beautiful hand!'

I will tell you one more way by which you can tell whether you love Jesus. Will you try and remember them all? If there is anybody you love going away, and you know they are coming back again, won't you watch at the windows when you see them coming down the road, and be glad to say, 'Oh! he is coming?' You would love his return.

I have heard of a little boy the window of whose bedroom looked to the East. Do you know what is going to happen in the East? I believe Jesus is coming that way. There is Jerusalem out there, and Jesus will come again to Jerusalem. This little boy knew that, and every morning when he woke he opened his window and looked out to see if Jesus was coming. Was not that very nice? He thought, 'I hope He will come to-day!' and so he daily looked out to see if He was coming.

There are only four ways by which we can tell if we love Jesus. Will you think of them? *Be alone, that you may talk secrets*; tell Him your secrets, and He will tell you secrets. *Give Him something*, the thing that you believe He would like best. If you went into a shop to buy a present, you would choose the thing that you thought your friend would like best. What would Jesus like best? Your heart. *Bear something for Him*; do not mind being called names; what if people say you are a saint, or a Methodist, or anything else? If they tease you and laugh at you, and are very unkind to you, it is a sign of love to endure it. *And to long for His coming again*. Think, 'Jesus may come to-day; oh! what a happy day it would then be. I shall be with Him for ever—oh, happy day!' Those are the four signs of love.

Did you ever hear of the battle of Prestonpans? In Scotland, many years ago, there was a great Scottish chief, MacGregor, who commanded a regiment. He was much loved by his soldiers. In the battle MacGregor, the colonel, was cut down. He was bleeding and dying. I believe he died there. When the soldiers saw him fall they did not continue to fight well. So MacGregor, though so wounded that he could not stand up, when he saw what was happening, and that the men were likely to run away, lifted himself up on his elbow, blood streaming from his chest, and he said '*My children, I am dying for you*. But, though wounded, I am not yet dead. I can see you!' And he looked over them all, and there was such power, such feeling in MacGregor's eye that they felt brave again at once. The eye of MacGregor looking at them made them fight bravely again.

Think of the eye of Jesus! That is everything to us. It seems too wonderful—but Jesus, at this moment while I am speaking, is here! He is looking at you! See that loving Eye, how tenderly it looks! I think I hear Him saying, 'Lovest thou Me!'—  
JAMES VAUGHAN.



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## THE FORTY DAYS THAT OUR LORD LIVED UPON THIS EARTH AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE GRAVE.

ACTS 1. 3.

We are going to think about 'The Forty Days'. They are such important days that they are generally called 'The Forty Days'. Perhaps they are the most important 'forty days' that ever were spent. 'Forty days'—between the time when Jesus Christ rose from the grave and the day when Jesus Christ went up into heaven. For when Jesus Christ began, He began with 'forty days' in the wilderness; and when He ended, He ended with 'forty days' with His Church, before He went up to heaven.

But how do we know there were 'forty days'? Can you tell me? Look at the third verse of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: will you read it? 'He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.'

'Forty days.' Now look. From the feast of the Passover to the feast of the Pentecost was—how many days? 'Fifty.' The word 'Pentecost' means 'fifty'. And it was called 'Pentecost,' because it was fifty days after the Passover. Now next Thursday is Holy Thursday; the day that Jesus Christ went up into heaven; and Sunday week will be Pentecost, Whit Sunday, when the Holy Ghost came.

Now, how many days is it from Thursday to Sunday week? 'Ten.' Take away ten from fifty, and how many remain? 'Forty.' Then there are 'forty days' that Jesus Christ was upon the earth after He rose from the grave, before He went up to heaven, which was next Thursday.

Now we are going to talk about these 'forty days'. 'Forty days' between what? Between the time that Jesus Christ rose from the grave and the time that Jesus Christ went up to heaven. I wonder why. Why did not Jesus go up straight from the grave to heaven? He had said upon the cross, 'It is all done; it is finished!' Why did He come back to this poor world? Can you think? May we ask why? May we ask why God does anything? Yes, we may; but we must remember that we cannot tell half the reasons, when we ask why God does anything? We may find out one or two reasons, but there are a great many reasons that we do not know; and very likely the reasons we do not know are very much better than the reasons we do know.

Now will you try to think with me? I am going to think of six reasons why Jesus Christ came back

to this world again before He went up to heaven. You must think too.

I. The first reason I think of is, to show that He loved us; to show that He loved this bad world still, and that He was not in such a hurry to leave it. He loved us, and so He came back to us. That is the first reason.

II. The next reason I think of is because He wanted to prove, and show for certain that He had risen from the grave; for supposing Jesus Christ did not rise from the grave, then what Jesus Christ said did not come true, because He said He would rise; and if Jesus Christ did not rise from the grave, then we shall not rise from the grave; but when we are put into the grave, there we shall stay for ever. That would be a sad thing! Therefore, it was very important that Jesus Christ should prove that He rose from the grave. So He came back to this world to prove that He rose from the grave. He did not show Himself to everybody. He showed Himself to witnesses appointed for that purpose, that they might witness who had seen Him; that they might be able to go and tell everybody they had seen Him, and that He was risen. That is my second reason.

III. The third reason is because He wished to show not only that He was risen, but that He was the very same Jesus that was on the cross, and put into the grave. He showed that He had got a body. How did He show that He had got a body? Twice He ate, just as we do, because we have bodies. If we had not bodies, we should not eat and drink. Do you remember when? Once in the room when the ten disciples were together, He took some broiled fish and a honeycomb, and He ate with the ten in the room. And once by the side of the lake. He showed He had got a body. It was not quite the same body that He had before. I mean it was a spiritual body. I cannot explain that. It is too deep. It was a spiritual body. We shall see a little more about that presently.

Not only did He show them that He had got a body, but that it was the same body, because when He chose He could make people see that it was the same body. They saw it was Jesus; they knew Him. Besides that He showed the wounds. How many wounds had He? 'Five.' Two in His feet; two in His hands; one in His side. He showed His wounds to Thomas. So that it was certainly the same body.

And was it the same heart? Did He love them just as much? Did He do just the same sort of things? Did He come and talk to the unhappy, and comfort them? Did He teach them, and say

He was still their Brother? Yes; He had the same body and the same heart. That is the third reason.

IV. Now we will look at the fourth reason. Because He wanted to talk to them about the things that concern the kingdom of God. What does that mean? Do you know what the 'kingdom of God' means in the Bible? Sometimes it means heaven; sometimes it does not mean heaven. Sometimes it means your heart. If Jesus is the King of your heart, if His throne is your heart, then your heart is 'the kingdom of God'. And sometimes 'the kingdom of God' means the Church, all about the Church, the Church on earth, that is 'the kingdom of God'. It is one province of the great 'kingdom of God'. Now He wanted to talk to them about that, about the Church. He told them about people being baptised, and about the minister's preaching; and that they were to go into all the world, and tell people to become Christians, how they were to keep the commandments, about the Holy Ghost, and about the Bible. That was the fourth reason. He came to tell them about the things that concern 'the kingdom of God,' i.e. the Church.

V. Now what was the fifth reason? To show us how He would be with us always. Is Jesus with us always? 'Yes.' Do we always know He is with us? 'No.' In some places He is with us, and we do not know it. So it was when Jesus appeared on those 'forty days'. Sometimes He was with people, and they did not know it was Jesus. So He is sometimes close to you, and you do not know it, till your heart tells you, till the Holy Spirit tells you, till Jesus tells you. It was so then; it is so now. Jesus is always with you, though you do not know it. Therefore it was to show, I think, how He will be with us always in the same way.

VI. And one more reason—this is very difficult. I am not sure about it myself. When you and I rise out of the grave, do you think we shall go straight up into heaven? I do not. I think that when Jesus comes again, then we shall rise out of our graves; and then we shall be, I think, a little while with Jesus upon this earth; and then we shall go to heaven, just as Jesus did. He rose from the grave, and stayed upon the earth awhile. Then He went up to heaven. I think it is to tell us we are to do the same, if we are God's children. When Jesus comes we shall rise out of our graves; we shall be with Jesus on this earth some time—I do not know how long—perhaps a thousand years, and then go to heaven.

Those are my six reasons. Can you remember them? Let us see. Try to think of them. Because He loved us, to prove that He was risen, to show that He was the same Jesus still, to talk about the things of the kingdom of God, to show us the way in which He is always with us, and to lead us to think that we shall, like Him, walk this earth when we rise from the grave.

Now we shall think about Jesus showing Himself in 'the forty days'. Does everybody know it? Can

you go on with me about Jesus showing Himself when He rose from the grave? I shall name the occasions at first very quickly, and then come back to them.

The first time Jesus appeared was to Mary Magdalene. The next I am not quite sure about—what do you say? To 'some women'; 'three women,' I think, but that I am not sure of; it is not quite certain. The next to Peter, I think, but I am not quite sure. In the twenty-fourth of Luke it is said, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon,' therefore I think so. It is simply said He showed Himself to Peter. Then He showed Himself to two men—where were they going? 'To Emmaus.' Then He showed Himself to the ten disciples in the room.

These were the appearances the first Sunday, Easter Sunday. Do you know why it is called Easter Sunday? 'Eostre,' a heathen goddess, had her festival at this season. And some think 'Easter' was on that account so named.

When Jesus rose, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene; then to three women, then to Peter (I think), then to the two going to Emmaus, then to the ten disciples—without Thomas—in the room. All that was in Jerusalem.

Did He appear again all that next week? Not till the next Sunday. Then, to how many? 'Eleven.' Who was, then, there with them? 'Thomas.' Then, back from Jerusalem, where did He go? 'To Galilee'—as He told them. And where did He appear again? 'On the mountain' that He appointed them. I am not quite sure, but I think that then He showed Himself to 'the five hundred' all at once. And then He went to the lake, and there you will remember He wrought a miracle. He made Peter catch a wonderful draught of fishes, as He had done once before. Then they came to the shore, and He appeared to the disciples, and took a meal with them; and talked with Peter; and talked about John. That was in Galilee. Then He came back to Jerusalem, and He saw them, I think, at Jerusalem, and talked with them some of those beautiful words that we have; and then He took them out to—where? 'Bethany'—to the Mount of Olives; and there, after talking with them a little, and blessing them, He was taken up to heaven.

Those are the appearances of Jesus in 'the forty days'. Can you remember them? Shall we go through them again? I will speak only of those we are certain of. Mary Magdalene, the two going to Emmaus, the ten in the room without Thomas, then the next Sunday the eleven with Thomas, then in Galilee on the lake, at the miracle of the fishes, to Peter and the others, on the bank, and the conversation; and then at Bethany, when He went up to heaven. We are certain also, but we do not know when, He showed Himself to 'five hundred brethren,' to Peter, to James, but we are not quite sure where.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonas,

lovest thou Me?' Peter said, 'Yea, Lord; I am Thy friend.' 'I am Thy friend,' he said. Then Jesus said again, 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' Peter said, 'I am Thy friend'. Then Jesus said again, *not* 'Lovest thou Me?' but He said, 'Are you My friend?' And Peter said, 'Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest I am Thy friend'. Jesus said, 'Do you love Me?' Peter said, 'I am Thy friend'. He said it three times. When Jesus comes again that will be the question.

Will Jesus come again? He certainly will come again. Did the two angels say so? Two angels, looking like men, were there on the Mount, when the disciples were looking up. They said, 'Don't waste your time gazing up into heaven, in vision, or in idle thoughts about it, He will come again.' But how? 'The same way you have seen Him go.' In His body? 'Yes.' Blessing? 'Yes.' The last thing and the first thing to bless? 'Yes.' What will He say: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father'. The last word on His lips blessing; the first word on His lips when He comes again blessing. Such a dear, loving Jesus is He! 'Come, ye blessed of My Father!'

And who will walk with Him then? Shall I tell you? Those who have 'kept their garments white'. Have we, any of us, kept our garments white? Have you? No. But it means those who, having soiled their garments, have had them *washed*. If your garment is soiled, it can be washed. Washed? In what? In the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who 'keep their garments white'; those who have their soiled garments washed in the fountain of the blood of Jesus Christ; they shall 'follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

## CHRIST IN THE SPIRIT-WORLD

(For *Passiontide*)

ACTS I. 3.

CAN you tell me why we call this 'Passion Week'? Can you tell me the meaning of the word 'passion'? 'Sufferings'. Can you tell me where Christ's 'sufferings' are called 'passion'? In the first chapter of the Acts, and the third verse: 'He showed Himself alive after His *passion*,' i.e. 'sufferings'.

When a person is very angry we say 'he is in a passion'; or we speak of persons having 'naughty passions'. How is that? Is it 'suffering'? When a person is angry, is he 'suffering'? When a little boy is very angry, do we say, 'Poor little boy! he is in a suffering'? That is quite true: we won't say 'he is in a passion,' but 'he is suffering'.

A great many words have changed their meaning. This has done so. Can you think of any other word that has changed its meaning? We have prayed just now in the Litany, 'O Lord, deal not with us *after* our sins?' Do we mean that God would have nothing to do with us when we have sinned? 'No.' What does 'after our sins' mean? 'According to our sins.'

What does it mean in the collect when we say, 'Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings'. Is God to

'hinder' us? What does 'prevent' mean? 'Go before.' The word has changed its meaning.

So the word 'passion' has changed its meaning. 'Passion' means 'suffering'. We begin to-day the 'Passion Week'. We begin it with joy, because it is Palm Sunday. This is the day when Jesus went into Jerusalem, and all the children cried, 'Hosanna!' It is a happy Sunday. And next Sunday will be also a very happy Sunday, because that will be Easter Sunday, the day when Jesus rose from the grave.

'Passion Week' begins with joy and ends with joy. You will always find your sorrows inside your joys, you see if you do not. 'Palm Sunday'; 'Easter Sunday'. 'Passion Week' comes between: the sorrows inside the joys!

Now we are going this afternoon to talk about next Friday. You have already considered about Jesus being crucified, and about Jesus suffering, dying; and now we are going to consider this afternoon what happened after three o'clock next Friday? Why do I say 'after three o'clock'? Because Christ died at three o'clock.

And what is dying? What happened? Shall I tell you? His body was separated from His soul. Do you understand? That was dying, His body was separated from His soul. Death means separating. You have got a body, and you have got a soul; and now they are joined together, wonderfully joined together! I cannot explain how. But some day your body and soul will separate. That will be dying.

Will you separate from God when you die? No; not if you are a good child. You won't separate from God. Will you separate from those you love on earth—from your father and mother, your brothers and sisters—when you die? I do not know. I am not at all sure that you would. Perhaps you would. They would separate from you; but I am not at all sure that you would separate from them. But you would separate your body from your soul, though you won't separate from God; and I am not sure that you will be separated from anybody.

To die, then, is to separate body and soul. That happened to Jesus at three o'clock, as on next Friday. And I want to think about it.

I am going now to speak—after Jesus died—of what became of His body, and what became of His soul.

What became of His body? It was 'buried'. What became of His soul? It says in the Creed, 'He descended into hell'. And that is what I am going to talk about, that His body was 'buried,' and His soul descended into hell'.

His body was 'buried'. Do you know what we have just been calling Christ's burying in the Litany? 'Thy precious death and burial.' Quite right. That is just what I want you to say. 'Precious!' We call it 'precious'. 'His precious death and burial.' Let us think about the 'precious burial'.

There was a man of the name of Joseph. Where



did he live? 'In Arimathea.' Can you tell me who was born in Arimathea, besides Joseph? It was the same person that God called when a little boy, who said, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'. 'Samuel.' It is called, 'Ramathaim-zophim'. This man, Joseph, was of Arimathea.

Was he a good man? 'Yes.' Was he a little bit of a coward? Yes, he was; for, though he was a follower of Christ, he did it 'secretly, for fear of the Jews'.

And Joseph was not the only man interested. Who was the other man? Everybody think. Who was there besides Joseph? 'Nicodemus.' Did Nicodemus go to Pilate? 'No.' Nicodemus came to Calvary; we do not read that He came to Pilate. What sort of man was Nicodemus? Had he, too, been a little bit of a coward? 'Yes.' Where do we read of Nicodemus? In which of the Gospels? In St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, or St. John? 'St. John.' In how many places in St. John do we read of Nicodemus? Three. In the third chapter, the seventh, and the nineteenth. The first time he was a bit of a coward, though a good man. The second time he got bolder, because he said, 'Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?' The third time he became very bold. What makes people bold? What gives people a good boldness?

If you were to go and take the eggs away from a little bird in its nest, what would make that little bird fight you? Love. Love makes people bold. If you are cowards in your religion, if you are ashamed of your religion, it is because you have not love!

Nicodemus did not mind what the Jews would say. So Joseph went to Pilate, and Nicodemus to Calvary, and together 'they took the body of Jesus'.

Where did they take it to? Far—a long way? No, quite close. Which side of Jerusalem was Calvary? That side, the West. And there was the hill Golgotha on the top of it. Quite close to it was a garden, and the garden belonged, perhaps, to Joseph, certainly the tomb in it belonged to Joseph. There they took Him. It was the funeral.

Well, they put Him in the tomb sideways. It was the first time anybody had been put into that tomb. It was 'a new tomb'. Why were we told so particularly that it was a new tomb? Why was it so important? Was it an honour to the owner? That was one reason, but not the chief reason. Can you think of any other? Did you ever read of anybody being buried, being put into a grave, and he touched some bones, and when he touched the bones he came to life again? Look at 2 Kings xiii. 21: 'And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet'. Whose grave was it? 'Elisha's.' When the man's body touched Elisha's bones, what happened? 'He came to life.'

Supposing anybody had been buried in Joseph's

tomb before, then they would have said, 'Jesus Christ came to life—just as the man did who was put into Elisha's tomb. Touching the bones made Him come to life.' Then they would have got rid of the miracle of the resurrection of Christ. Or perhaps they would have said, 'It was not Christ who came out of the tomb. It was somebody else.' But as it was 'a new tomb,' as nobody had been buried there before, of course there were no bones there; therefore Christ could not have been raised by touching the bones.

In Persia, I don't know whether it is so now, but it used to be the custom for people to put on black when anybody was born, and white when anybody died. They thought it was sad for anybody to be born, to come into this world of trouble; but when they died they put on white, for they thought 'how joyful it was for them to be buried!'

Is a funeral an unhappy thing? Do you really think it is? I have heard of a little child saying, 'Oh! I don't mind dying; but I don't like to be put down in the pit hole'. Do you think that?

I will tell you how it is. Did you ever sow a seed? Does the seed mind being sown? Will the seed come up again? Yes. Which will be the prettier, the seed, or what comes up from the grave? The latter, won't it?

The seed is not very pretty, is it? but the thing which comes up from the seed is a beautiful thing! Perhaps you are not very pretty now. You are not quite pretty. The prettiest person in this church is not quite pretty, because you have sinned. You are all seeds, all going to be put into the ground, and all, if God's children, will come up beautiful, beautiful!

People used always in baptism to be put into the water, put in and come up again. We do not do it so now in this country, because it is not necessary to do that; and besides it might hurt people's health. Therefore we don't immerse them, but we sprinkle them. But it comes to the same thing. We should think of the immersion. I have no doubt, if this were not a cold country, immersion is the right thing. Because if I put a little baby into the water, it is 'buried': if I lift it up again, there is the *resurrection*. To be 'baptised,' is to bury the old nature, and come up with the new nature; leaving the first Adam, the wicked part, buried, and coming up a good child of God. So if you are all God's dear children, and living as such, you have been 'buried in baptism'.

Now I shall not say anything more about the baptism, but about 'the descent into hell,' which is very difficult.

Christ 'went down into hell,' which? His body or His spirit, i.e. His soul? You have just said His body was put into the grave; you have seen what sort of a grave it was. Now did His spirit 'go down to hell'?

I must just explain this. Let us see if it did 'go down to hell'. Turn to the sixteenth Psalm, the second of Acts, and the fourth of Ephesians. In Psalm xvi. 10, it says, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul

in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption'. The same thing is said in Acts ii. 27, repeated by St. Peter. Now look at Ephesians iv. 9. It is not quite the same thing, but it means the same: 'Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?'

Now what does it mean when it says, in the Bible and in the Creed, that 'Christ descended into hell'?

Do you think it means this: that when Christ was upon the cross, He suffered such terrible pains that it was like going down to hell; so that we say that 'He went down to hell'. Do you think it means that? No; it does not mean that, because it is something after that.

Does it mean, do you think, that His body was buried in the grave? does it mean only that? No, it does not mean that, because it is spoken of as something separate from that.

Does it mean that Christ 'went into hell,' and suffered the torments of hell? 'No.' How do you know that it does not mean that? Because it was only His spirit. His sufferings were done.

It does not mean what He suffered on the cross; it does not mean He was put into the grave; it does not mean that as the wicked, He went and suffered the torments of hell.

It means 'He went into the place of departed spirits'. What is the right word? Do you all know? Let me tell you. 'Hell' is another of the words which has changed its meaning. We saw that the word 'passion' had changed its meaning; and we saw also that the word 'after' and the word 'prevent,' had both changed their meanings. And one word that has changed its meaning a great deal is 'hell'.

Let me tell you a little about it. Will you listen? The old word is 'Hades'. Do you know how it is spelt? 'H—A—D—E—S.' Now what is 'Hades'? Is it for the happy or unhappy? For the good or the bad? For both. 'Hades' is made up of two places. There are two parts. One is happy; the other, unhappy.

What is the happy part called? 'Paradise.' Do you know what the word 'paradise' means? It means 'a park,' or 'pleasure grounds,' 'beautiful grounds,' a little different from 'a garden'. 'Paradise' is the Greek word for 'park'. Therefore we call the garden of Eden 'paradise,' a beautiful park!

What is the unhappy part called? It is called by different names. I will tell you one—'Tartarus'. That is one name for the unhappy part.

Then 'Paradise' and 'Tartarus,' the happy place and the unhappy place put together, make 'Hades'. Jesus went to 'Hades,' a place made up of the happy place and the unhappy place.

Did Christ go to paradise? Did He ever say He was going to paradise? Yes. Didn't He say to the thief on the cross: 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise?' Therefore we are quite sure Jesus went to paradise.

I think that during those three days Christ did go and 'preach to the spirits in prison'. And the reason

why He preached particularly to those who lived at the time of the flood might have been this: they had no Bible; they did not know what we know, therefore their spiritual ignorance. We do not know what the result was. That we must leave.

Then may we think, 'If I am lost, and go and become one of "the spirits in prison," perhaps Christ will come and save me out of that prison?' No. Because we are totally differently situated. That was just the time of Jesus dying and rising: great things happened then that never happened before, and will never happen again.

Besides, we are not in the same place, or in the same state, as those at the time of the flood. Therefore there is not the least reason for thinking that would happen again, or happen to us. Certainly not.

Now that is what I think it means when it says, 'He descended into hell'. 'He went to Hades, i.e. 'hell'—made up of two parts—Paradise and Tartarus. He certainly went to Paradise; perhaps He went to Tartarus. But whether he went to Tartarus or not, He went to 'hell'. If He went to the happy place, He went to hell, because Paradise was a part of Hades, which is 'hell'.

You will find our old English poets—especially Spenser—use the word 'hell' in that meaning.

You see what will become of you. I do not know how soon that body of yours will separate from your soul. But that separation we call 'death'. And then your body will be laid—like a little seed—in the ground. It will be something like going to sleep in the ground, for your body won't know anything that happens: it will be conscious neither of pain nor pleasure. And you will 'sleep' till Jesus comes again. And when He comes again, you know wherever Jesus is there is no death. Everything is life. Everything will start into life when Jesus comes again. When He was upon earth, dead bodies started into life when Jesus came near them. And then all in the sea and in the earth will come up to life!

Where will your spirit go? To paradise, if you are God's child, to that beautiful, happy place! There your spirit will be with God, quite happy. You will have no body—but you will be all spirit—till Christ comes.

But when He comes the body out of the grave will meet the spirit in paradise, and then you will be complete. Your body will be complete, and your spirit will be complete, perfectly holy, perfectly happy. The body will be without weakness, sickness, sorrow, or sin. The body will be as wings to the spirit, not to drag it down as it does now.

And joined together that beautiful body and that beautiful spirit will go into heaven, the place where we are to be happy for ever and ever!—JAMES VAUGHAN.

## THE WHITE SUNDAY

ACTS II.

HAVE you ever heard why this Sunday is called 'Whit-Sunday'? There are a great many reasons

given. I will tell you two; you shall tell me which you like best. Two reasons for the name of 'Whit-Sunday'.

One is this: On Whit-Sunday people used to come very much to be baptised, the grown-up people and the little babies—a great many people; and they all came dressed in white. Why were they dressed in white? Why do people dress in white? Why do people when they are married dress in white? Why do people when they come to be baptised dress in white? Is it because they want to feel that they are going to be made clean and pure? And because so many came all in white, did it therefore come to be called 'White-Sunday,' or, shortened, 'Whit-Sunday'. That is one reason. I will tell you of another.

If you count Easter Sunday one, and then count on to this Sunday, you will find that this is the eighth. Now the French word for 'eight' is 'huit'. You know a great many French words came into English. When William the Conqueror came to England, and when persons who were persecuted at the time of the Edict of Nantes came over here, a great many French words were brought in. People did not know how to spell some of them, so they spelt this word 'huit' as if it were 'white'. Which do you like best? The 'White-Sunday,' or the French 'eight' or 'huit'?

What happened on Whit-Sunday? The Holy Ghost came down. When the disciples were all assembled, 'There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them'. Of course it would only be fitting this afternoon that we should speak about the Holy Ghost. And one of His names is—can you tell me? Tell me one of His names. Think! His sweetest name! Supposing you were to be greatly troubled, who is the person to whom you would go, above all others in the world, to comfort you? I think I know. Your mother! Would you not go to your mother to comfort you? God says that the Holy Spirit will comfort you just like a mother. You will find it in the sixty-sixth chapter of Isaiah: 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you'. The Holy Ghost comforts us like a mother. There could not be anything sweeter.

What does 'Holy Ghost' mean? *Holy Spirit*. Sometimes, when we cannot look at the sun, we look at a sunbeam; or we look at the reflection of the sun in a looking-glass. We cannot see the sun in his full lustre.

I. Now I want to speak about the Holy Ghost *by an emblem*. What does an emblem mean? Who can tell me? 'Emblem' means 'a likeness,' something like the thing we are thinking of. We will think of the Holy Ghost by some things that the Holy Ghost is like. What is God the Holy Ghost like? He is like—what? What is that you can feel, but you cannot see. Tell me something you can feel and not see. You felt it to-day, but you did not see it. What is it? You felt it very strong to-day; as you came to church you felt it. *The wind*. You feel it, but you cannot see it. You can feel the Holy Ghost,

but you cannot see Him. Therefore we will speak about that.

Do you remember any verse in the Bible where it speaks about 'the wind'? Do you remember Christ speaking to Nicodemus? What did He say to him we must all be? 'We must all be born again.' 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The Holy Spirit is like the wind. Let us think about that.

Do you know, have you thought about it, *nobody can go to heaven unless they are 'born again'*. Now that is a very solemn thing. Nobody can go to heaven unless they are born again!

A man was once asked, 'Where were you born?' He said, 'I was born in London, and I was born in Salisbury.' 'What! born in two places?' he was asked. 'Yes; I was born in London,' he replied, 'and I was born in Salisbury.' 'What do you mean?' He answered, 'My body was born in London, and my soul was born in Salisbury.' 'We must be born again.'

I have read about a great palm-tree in the hot countries, which is called the *Palm Azaleum*, and when the palm-blossom comes out of the shield, the flower breaks the shield and makes such a noise, it is as loud as a cannon being fired off! Everybody can know when that flower comes out.

I have never seen any conversions anything like that; all I have ever seen have been so very quiet. And I think it is so with almost everybody. It is as quiet as when the little grain comes out of the grass, or when the flower comes out in the bud; you can hardly tell when it happens. Some few can tell when they are 'born again,' but most cannot. I do not know whether you are—I cannot tell whether you are 'born again'. But has a change taken place in you? Can you say, 'I now like things I did not like; and other things I used to like, I do not now like—I like the things of God, I like to say my prayers, I like to think of Jesus coming again'? If you have any feelings like that you are 'born again'; if you have not, you are not. We 'must be born again,' before we can go to heaven.

The Holy Ghost does as He pleases, when He pleases. One day there was a carter driving his cart along a road; he was a very wicked man, and when he was driving there was a very high wind, and suddenly the high wind blew a tract to his feet. Where that tract came from he never knew till he died; but the high wind blew it to his very feet. He took up the tract and read it, and a word there changed the man, made him a good man, a Christian. The Holy Ghost, like the wind, turned his heart; by the Holy Ghost he became a good man. So 'the wind,' the Holy Ghost, works. You cannot see when the wind comes, but so it is.

II. Now let us think of another thing the Holy Ghost is like. When He came down upon the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was baptised, how did He



appear? *As a dove.* And people generally consider a dove to be very gentle. A dove is not always gentle; but a dove is considered an emblem or likeness of something very gentle. When the Holy Ghost comes, He comes very gently, and He makes us gentle.

I knew two little girls who were going out of a church, and one little girl pushed by the other little girl, and she made way for her to pass, and as she passed, she said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. That was gentle, like a dove.

There was a boy throwing stones at some poor little birds. It is very cruel to throw stones at birds. As he was going to throw a stone at a sweet little bird, the little bird sang so sweetly that the boy held his hand up but could not throw at the bird. Another boy passing, said, 'Why don't you throw? You will hit it.' 'I cannot,' he said; 'the little bird is singing so sweetly, I cannot hit it.' If you know anybody who is unkind to you, you sing like the little bird, and then see if anybody will hurt you.

III. The Holy Spirit is like *dew*. It says so twice in the prophecy of Hosea. 'Dew' is to be seen in the morning and evening. It is very pretty and makes everything so fresh where it comes. Now I have got a piece of advice to give you. If you wish to be good and please God, take care that every morning and every evening you get a little of 'the dew,' the *dew of the Holy Spirit* upon you. Pray for 'the dew'; it will make everything fresh and nice. If things are bad, pray for the Holy Spirit to come down as dew in the morning. You are now in the morning of life. *Now* is the time to have dew. May 'the dew of thy birth be of the womb of the morning!' Get the Holy Spirit to come and make you soft, and holy, and happy, and loving.

Then I hope the dew (the Holy Spirit) will always abide in and upon you, not like the natural dew, that soon passes away.

IV. There are two more things I should like to think of. The Holy Spirit is like *fire*. Let us see that. Supposing I were to give you a piece of iron, and say to you, 'I want you to make a pretty thing, an image out of that iron, what would you do with it? If you got a hammer and chisel and worked ever so hard at it, it would not make it into an image. What, then, would you do? Put it into the fire, then it would get soft; then you could make it into almost any shape you like. So it is with your hearts; they are like iron. You have tried to make them good; beat them into a pretty shape; but you cannot do so; but put them into 'the fire,' the Holy Spirit will make them soft. He will make them into right shapes. So St. Paul says in the twelfth of Romans, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head'. *Fire softens*.

So you have got thoughts, and wisdom, and knowledge. But what good will they all do, if a little bit of fire does not come? There must be a spark of fire, the Holy Spirit.

One more thing I would say the Holy Ghost is like. He is like a *seal*. Do you remember anyone to whom it was said in the Bible? It was said to a young man Timothy. Speaking to him of those who had *the seal*, St. Paul said, 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal. The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'

V. The Holy Spirit is a *seal*. Now look here: supposing a person had got some very precious jewels, and suppose he was going abroad, and he was not going to take his jewels with him, and he wanted to be quite sure that his jewels would be safe when he came back again—what would he do? He would lock them up, and to make them quite safe he would put a seal upon the lock that nobody might be able to break the lock. So long as the seal was not unbroken the jewels would be quite safe, and he would find them right when he came back. You are Christ's jewels, He has bought you at a great price—His own blood. He is your Proprietor, and He has gone abroad, He has gone away, He has gone into 'a far country'. By and by He will come back again. But while He is in that 'far country,' what does He do with you? He has 'sealed' you with the Holy Spirit. If you take care not to break that 'seal,' then you are quite safe; but if you trifle with that seal, that is to say, if you grieve the Holy Spirit, if you do what you know to be wrong, the 'seal' will be broken; then what will become of the jewels? You will be robbed of them; they will be taken away by the enemy. But keep the Holy Spirit in your heart, then you will be safe when Christ comes back.

In the time of the Emperor Tiberius, there was a law in Rome that anybody who carried a particular ring on his finger must never go into any dirty or wrong place. This was in the time of Tiberius, who reigned after Augustus. A great many people got rings with the image of Augustus upon them, and any one wearing one of those rings was never to go into any wrong place.

If that was the law of Rome about the image of Augustus, what must be the law about those who have the image of Christ, the seal upon them, the seal of the Holy Spirit.

You were 'sealed' thus at your baptism; you carry the seals. You must never go into wrong places, never do wrong things, because you have got the seal of the King of kings upon you. There is not the youngest child in this church who has not the seal of God upon him. What must you do? You have got the seal; *keep it holy!* People do not think enough about the Holy Ghost. I advise you to pray about the Holy Ghost. Think of Him as being like the wind, the water, the dew, the fire, the seal. Think more about Him at home. Try to get more of Him. That, when 'the wind' cometh as it listeth, you may be 'born again' by that Spirit, to go as He pleases: that your heart may be clean and white by that 'water'; that you may be gentle, like 'the dove'; that you may have 'the dew' upon

your soul; that you may be soft and tender; that you may have that 'fire' in you that can mould you into the right shape; that you may have that 'seal' upon your heart which shall never break, but seal you safe for ever and ever!—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### TONGUES OF FIRE

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.'—ACTS II. 1-4.

ON this great festival the Apostles and Disciples were assembled together in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were praying. They were waiting for the promise of the Spirit. Suddenly the whole room was shaken as with a tempest, and bright flames, like tongues of fire, flickered for a moment over every head. These were, indeed, wonderful outward signs; but we must not think of this rush of tempest and this shower of flaming tongues, as the most wonderful thing that happened. They were but the outward signs of something more wonderful still. The Holy Ghost filled the hearts of all that were present—not only the Apostles, but the men and women who were with them (Acts II. 17, 18), and they burst out into loud shouts of praise and thanksgiving to God. I do not mean now to attempt to explain to you what the gift of tongues was. It is a difficult question, and you would scarcely be able to understand it at present; but I wish to show you what this wind and this fire signified. The wind and fire are visible things—that is, things which can be seen with our eyes or felt with our hands. The Holy Spirit is invisible—that is, we cannot see the Blessed Spirit of God; we cannot feel it, as we can feel a body of any sort. God then gives us the things which we can see to explain something to us of the things which we cannot see. The wind and the fire thus explain something to us of the nature and work of that Holy Spirit, of whose descent they were the outward signs.

**I. Wind.**—What a gentle thing wind is. What a powerful thing wind is.

Even so is the Spirit of God: speaking so tenderly to the heart of some little child; filling your young souls with every true, and beautiful, and loving thought that you have, and moving the strongest men to penitence and faith. The Spirit of God is gentle as the breeze, strong as the storm.

**II. Fire.**—There are two things which always belong to fire—heat and light. So the Spirit of God comes to us as light and as warmth. To enlighten us—that is, to teach us—to show us the meaning of God's Blessed Word, to explain to us what God is, and what our Blessed Saviour's life and death meant for us; and so to teach us many things which we cannot know without Him. So we say in our Collect to-day that God did teach the hearts of His faithful people, by the sending to them the Light of His Holy Spirit. And so we call the day Whitsun Day,

because God gave 'wit,' or, as the word 'wit' used to mean, 'wisdom,' to His disciples.

But fire gives heat as well as light. The Holy Spirit not only teaches us about God and about Christ, but makes our hearts flame up in love to Him.

The Holy Spirit came to abide with us for ever. The smallest boy or girl here is a 'Temple of the Holy Ghost'. The Holy Spirit dwells in you. How very sacred a thing, then, you ought to be to yourself. Defile not the Temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Defile it not with any hasty or impure language, with any resentful or hateful thoughts, with any false or unkind deeds. The Temple of God is *holy*. Ask God to give you grace to keep it holy. Keep this day as indeed a feast of first-fruits—offer to God the first-fruits of your life. There is one little prayer you can never pray too often. It is easily remembered. Resolve to-day that you will say it. Pray it every morning and every evening: 'O Lord, take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.'—T. ΤΕΙΧΜΟΥΘΗ ΣΗΚΕ, *Saint George for England*, p. 177.

### THEY KILLED THE PRINCE OF LIFE

ACTS III. 15.

BEFORE some of the young people here were born there was a great war, called the Crimean War, on the continent of Europe.

Now in a great war like that it is sometimes the case that if there should be a city or a fort near where the fighting is, the gates of it are shut and the walls made strong, and those who are inside fight to keep their enemies out, and those who are outside fight to get in.

In the Crimean War there was a city called Sebastopol, and one day the fighters inside of the city fired a great cannon-ball against the fighters outside. But this shot struck on the side of a hill and buried itself deep in the earth, and it so happened that at that very spot there was a spring of water, which had never been able to get out. But the opening caused by this cannon-ball made a way for it, and the spring gushed out, and the water was a great blessing to the poor soldiers who were stationed on that hill-side. So out of this evil thing came this that was good.

Now this is the very thing which the present passage shows.

The enemies of Christ put Him to death.

They really meant to do this and this only, to put Him to death. And they did put Him to death. 'By wicked hands they killed the Prince of Life.' But out of this evil deed God caused to flow forth the greatest blessing which ever came into the world.

From Jesus on the cross comes first our knowledge of God, comes next our knowledge of Himself, then comes the pardon of our sins.

I saw in a village I went to visit some time back an ancient stone cross, and at the foot of the cross there gushed out three springs of the purest, coolest water, which never dried up in summer and never froze up in winter.

That is just like the Cross of Christ. He was put to death; that was man's evil deed. But ever since then there have been flowing out into the world three springs of life, viz. faith, hope, and charity.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 80.

### ACT LIKE CHRISTIANS

ACTS IV. 13.

THE grace of God is something that can be seen, felt, enjoyed, and passed on to others, in its influence and blessing. The Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost and became earnest witnesses for Jesus, therefore they were marked men, and all Christians, whether young or old, should be *reflectors* of Jesus, *echoes* of Jesus, and brave *soldiers* for Jesus, so that the world will take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. Faith makes a Christian, Love proves a Christian, Trial tests a Christian, Life shows a Christian, and Death crowns a Christian. To act like a Christian is to be like the Apostles.

**I. Benevolent and Kind.**—Helpers of the helpless (ver. 9).

**II. Bold and Earnest.**—Preaching Jesus (ver. 12).

**III. Brave and Fearless.**—Dared to speak for Jesus (ver. 20).

**IV. Bright and Happy.**—Reflecting Jesus (ver. 13).

The Roman Censors took such an utter dislike to the wicked son of Africanus that they refused to let him wear a ring on which his father's likeness was engraved, alleging, 'that he who was so unlike the father's person was unworthy to wear the father's picture'. So the Lord will never grant any to enjoy the love of Christ in heaven who are destitute of His likeness on earth. To act like a Christian is to act like Christ in obedience, self-sacrifice, and service.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 9.

### A BLACK MAN RIDING IN A CHARIOT.

'Understandest thou what thou readeſt?'—ACTS VIII. 30.

A LONG time ago—about eighteen hundred and forty-five years ago—there was a black man riding in a carriage. He was driving through a country where there were but very few houses, and scarcely any people. But there was a man standing there. That man was a minister. And when the black man riding in the carriage came near to this man, something said to him, 'Go to that carriage!' 'He ran.' Whether it was because the carriage was going so quickly, or whether it was because he had such a loving heart, I do not know, but he 'ran' towards the carriage. And the minister saw that the black man was reading a book, and he said to him, 'Do you understand it?' 'Understandest thou what thou readeſt?' And the black man said, 'How can I, except some one should help me?' So he said to the minister, 'Get up into the carriage; sit with me; explain the book to me; help me'. So he got up into the carriage and sat with him; and they drove along. The black man was reading the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and the minister explained it to him.

That is the way it all began. 'Do you understand

what you are reading?' That is the way I want to begin now. I say to you, 'You read, but do you *understand* what you read?'

Oh! what a wonderful thing it is to read. I suppose almost everybody in this church can read. Can you read? Perhaps you can only read the little words. But I think everybody can read a little bit. It is a wonderful thing to be able to read. I hope you will all be able to read very nicely.

Did you ever think what it is you are doing when you read a book? Somebody wrote that book. In that book are that man's thoughts. That book is the thoughts of some man who probably lived before you were born; perhaps a very good man; a very wise man; a very great man. And those are his thoughts. And you are reading that man's thoughts. It is a wonderful thing to be able to do so—that you can now be reading the thoughts of some great, good man, who lived perhaps a hundred or a thousand years ago. Now he is telling you his thoughts. Is not it so? Now think. When you are reading, the man who wrote that book is telling you his thoughts, the thoughts he had when he wrote that book.

But when you read the Bible, what is it? That is a very wonderful book. *God is telling you His thoughts!* When you read the Bible, the great God from heaven is telling you His thoughts, His mind. He is telling you His mind. What an honour to be allowed to hear, to know, the thoughts of the mind of the great God! That is the Bible. *So God talks with us.* When you open your Bible, read your Bible, God is talking with you. Then, when you close the Bible, to kneel down and say your prayers, then you are talking to God. So that you are having 'conversation' with God. God speaks to you; then you speak back to God; and then again God will speak back to you; and you are really having *conversation*. God talking to you, and you talking to God. You are having conversation with the great God of heaven and earth. Oh! it is a grand thing to be able to read the Bible.

Now I want to say to you, Do you 'understand' it? Do you think you do? Do you *understand* your Bible?

I can fancy some of you saying to me, 'I am afraid I do not. I must say I feel very ignorant.' Do you feel that? Are you very ignorant? I am so very glad about that. Some one has said, 'To feel ignorant is the doorstep to the temple of truth'. I will say that again, because I think it is a very beautiful thing to say, '*To feel ignorant is the doorstep to the temple of truth*'. So if you feel ignorant, you have got to the doorstep. That is something. Now I hope you will soon go into the temple of truth. You are on the doorstep. If you feel, on the other hand, that you know a great deal, you are *not* on the doorstep. If you feel, 'I am a very clever boy or girl, I don't want you to teach me', then you are not 'on the doorstep'. But if you feel you are very ignorant, you are 'on the doorstep of the temple of truth'.



There are very *difficult things in the Bible*. Somebody has said of the Bible, and I think it is very true, 'It is like water; and the water is so shallow that a little child can walk in it; until it is so deep that an elephant can swim in it'. That is the Bible. There are very difficult things in the Bible; deep mysteries. There are some things in the Bible which, when you cannot understand, I advise you to leave alone for a little while. If you go down to the sea to bathe, and find the water very, very deep, if you cannot swim you do not go in very far, but just stand on the shore.

But while there are some very deep things in the Bible, there is a great deal that we may know, and we shall be happy if we do know. I want to think about that. How are we to begin? What is the way to 'understand' the Bible?

I. What should you put first? *Begin with a little prayer*. David did. He loved his Bible so much and understood it so much, though he had not the same Bible as we have; he had only five or six books. He said he loved it so, when reading it sometimes, that he would 'open his mouth, and draw in his breath'! It was so beautiful. And he began with prayer 'Make me to understand it,' he said. That is a nice little prayer. 'Make me,' I cannot make myself, 'make me to understand.' Another time he said, 'Open mine eyes that I may see wondrous things'. That is the way to begin. Begin with a little prayer. 'Make me to understand.' 'Open mine eyes.'

Now having said your prayer we go to the Bible. The Bible is not like other books. You are not to learn it like other books. When you go up to your arithmetic, when you are doing a sum, it is not necessary to love the book; nor is it necessary to love the person who wrote the book. When you read Colenso's *Arithmetic* it is not necessary to love Colenso. You need not hate the man, but you need not love him. *But you must love your Bible*, for it is not with the head, but with the heart you are to know it.

It is *hard work*. It is always spoken of in the Bible as hard work. Solomon asked not for an understanding head, but an 'understanding heart'. It shows that 'understanding' has more to do with the heart than the head. And I am sure that those boys and girls who put their hearts into it, are those who will 'understand' it best. It is hard work. And we must love it.

I have read of a man who loved his Bible. I will tell you about him. He was a prisoner. He had not been in prison very long before they put him into a dark place, where there was no light. But three times a day he had his meals brought in: his breakfast, dinner, and supper; and while he ate those meals he was allowed to have a light, in order to see how to take them. But this good man who loved his Bible dearly thought to himself, 'Well, I can take my meals without a light; I can manage to eat without a light; but I cannot read my Bible without a light, so I would rather read my Bible when I get the light; then I can eat my meals in the dark.' So he did.

Every time when his light was brought in, say for an hour or so it was allowed him, he did not eat his breakfast, dinner, and supper, but he read his Bible. Then he took his meals afterwards in the dark.

Now I am sure that man had a right heart, and he had a true understanding. And God will take care to give 'the understanding heart' to us, if we love our Bible.

Well now we have settled that—love your Bible first, begin with that. 'Here is my Bible. God is speaking to me. I will love it.'

II. *But you must study it*. David said, 'All the day long have I studied it'. You cannot do that. You cannot study it 'all day long'. You must, however, be always thinking about it. There is nobody in the church now who could not study his or her Bible.

If you have ever been in the fields in summer, say a clover field, you have seen a little winged thing flying in and out of all the flowers, darting about, just alighting here and there, and then darting off again, never staying. Beautiful animal! beautifully coloured! *But it is always on the surface of everything*; it never goes deep. And you may see another little creature, not half so pretty; it is a little brown animal. But it always stays some time with the flower. It goes down deep, and it gets something at the bottom of the flower. It takes something away with it that will, perhaps, be useful to it in the winter. Do you know what those two little animals are? Don't you be a butterfly; be a bee. Go as the bee does. Not a touch and a go; but *dig deep*. You must study. You will not learn your Bible without hard study.

I have read of a little girl; her governess said to her, 'My dear, don't you *understand* your lessons?' The little girl said, 'Governess, you give me so many things to learn, I *have no time to learn "understanding"*'.

I think that is the case with you. In many schools they learn so many things that they have no time to *learn understanding*; they only learn the surface of things. I would advise every master and mistress to remember that! They must give their boys and girls time to 'learn understanding'.

Supposing I gave you a letter, and it was written in the Russian language, what would you do? You could not 'understand' a letter written in Russe, in the Russian language. But supposing you could find a man who knew Russian, then he could read the letter to you, and you would 'understand' it; or, supposing you had a letter but could not read it, and your correspondent came to your side, and read it to you, then you would 'understand' your letter, though you could not read it. That is exactly what we want in this study. We want to have an *interpreter*, one who knows the language, to explain it to us; and the person who wrote it to come and explain it. That is what we have got. We have the Holy Ghost to come; and God, who wrote it, and Jesus, the Great Teacher.

III. The next thing I advise you is to *ask help*. Now, if I am speaking to boys and girls who really wish to 'understand' their Bibles, why do not they sometimes come to me as their minister? Why don't you? I should be so glad to see you. Come to me and say, 'I am puzzled about this point, I cannot think how it can be'. Do you know it is *my duty*. I am a clergyman. I cannot do it as well as I ought. But I think I can help you a little. You come into my study, and say, 'I want this explained to me'. I shall be so glad for anybody in this church to come to me as your minister and say, 'I want to understand this chapter'. We will study it together. We will ask God's blessing upon it. I think I can help you. Will you do that? I cannot tell you how welcome you would be. You need not be afraid. Walk straight into my study. Open the front door, take the second door on the right, and walk straight in. There I shall be. I will help you to 'understand' the Bible. Perhaps you have somebody at home who can help you; if not, come to me; come to your clergyman.

IV. One more thing. If ever you read in the Bible something you ought to do, *go and do it*. Act it out. You remember this verse, 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine'. But he must 'do' it. You must be a good boy, a good girl, trying to lead a good life and please God, then you will get on fast; God will be your teacher. If you are not good, you won't get on.

Supposing you were reading something in a room, and I came in and closed the shutters—could you read it then? Supposing you were going to light a candle, and there was an extinguisher put upon it, could you light it then? If you are doing anything naughty, it is putting up the shutters, it is putting the extinguisher upon the candle. If the extinguisher is on the candle, you cannot light it; if the shutters are put up, you cannot see. Don't put up the shutters; don't put on the extinguisher. If you are doing anything to displease God, if you are unkind to anybody, if you are living in any sin, the shutter is up, the extinguisher is put on, you won't 'understand' perhaps a single word.

At Stirling, some time ago, there was a beggar; those who visited Scotland saw him always there, on the hill. He knew his Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He could repeat it straight through, chapter and verse, so long as he had a particular key, which he fumbled about in his hand. If anybody took away his key, his memory failed. If they gave him another key, it would not do. But he could repeat correctly so long as he had one particular key. He was a gin drinker, a drunkard; a very bad man. *He knew his Bible, but he did not 'understand' it*. He had plenty of knowledge, but he was a poor drunkard!

Now will you remember my advice to you. When you are reading your Bible, it is God talking to you; come to it with a feeling that you are very ignorant, that there are very deep mysteries in it; love the book, and love the Writer; study it carefully, and

ask for help; act out whatever you find. Then I am sure you will be a good scholar.

I will just tell you one story. Did you ever hear of St. Augustine. He was a wonderful man, perhaps many would say (I do not know if I should say so) that he was the greatest Christian that ever lived. His books are most valuable. He lived in the fourth century. Up to the age of thirty-one he was a wild fellow, wicked, very wicked. One day when he was about thirty-one years old, Augustine, afterwards called St. Augustine, was lying under a fig-tree in a garden, close to a college in Italy. I often say to you what a blessed thing it is to have a good mother. He had an excellent mother. Oh, how he grieved her! There never was a man who had a better mother. But he grieved her deeply. He thought, 'What a wicked fellow I have been! How I have grieved my mother—and how I have grieved God!' As he was lying under the fig-tree he heard a voice,—where it came from he did not know, perhaps from the house near him, and he heard this voice say, in Latin, 'Get up and read!' He went to a friend of his and said, 'Have you got a Bible?' He took the Bible given him into his hand, and opened it on the thirteenth of Romans, and I will read you the two verses he read, they are the last two in the chapter. The words are these: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' He read them, and was a changed man from that time. He became a very holy man, a very useful man. Never has there been a nobler Christian than he; or one more useful, in all ages. And that is the way it all began. Reading the Bible, and forsaking his sins. '*Get up and read!*'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### CHOSEN VESSELS

'He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.'—ACTS IX. 15.

WITH these words the Lord calmed the fears of Ananias when he was told to visit Saul of Tarsus in the street called Straight in Damascus. The risen Saviour, still using images, had likened Saul to the struggling ox; and He now likens him to a rare vessel filled with sweet-smelling perfume. Very likely these never-to-be-forgotten words of Christ were still echoing in Paul's soul when, many years afterwards, he said, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels' (2 Cor. iv. 7). The vessel here meant is a household cup or bowl, and the treasure in it is the name or Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. *Its Material*.—All the vessels in your house—the strong bowls in the kitchen, the fine vases in the drawing-room and the china tea-cups—are made of clay and stone. The raw material of every one of them was found in the soil of the earth. The materials for earthenware are everywhere mixed up with the surface of the earth, though some soils suit the potter better than others. And so the whole world

is the Great Potter's field, and Christ's 'chosen vessels' were all common clay at first. When He took them up their natures were as coarse, unshaped masses; of the earth, earthy. Could the finest china vessel speak, it might truly say, 'I was once but a piece of common clay, trodden under foot; but the skilful potter lifted me up, and by the miracles of his art fashioned me into what I now am. I am a piece of base clay ennobled by his art. I cannot boast, for I have nothing which I have not received.' 'Tis he who has made me to differ.' The Apostle never tires telling us that he was the chief of sinners, and that he owes all to the grace of God. What hope for us! What hope for all here! Splendid vessels are now made from mere rubbish, broken glass, and old bones. And the outcasts of earth have been shaped into vessels of honour by Him who lifts the beggar from the dung-hill and sets him among His princes. It used to be thought that the materials for porcelain or 'china' could be found only in China; but we now know that Cornwall contains miles and mountains of these materials; and a blacksmith was the first in Europe to discover them even in the mud of the highway. And the people in China, Japan, and Africa, as well as those in Christian lands, have in them 'the making' of Christ's chosen vessels. The potter's art can triumph over the rudeness of the most unpromising materials. A lady, who had won many to Christ, was one evening thanking them for a testimonial they had given her, consisting of silver and 'china' articles. I will give you some of her words as recorded in her biography: 'When I gaze upon your gifts, I seem to read a sermon in each one, and cannot forbear once again proclaiming the old, old story. The silver reminds me that it was not always thus beautiful: it had first to be dug out of the earth, then placed in the crucible that the dross might be consumed, then moulded, and lastly, the mark of its genuineness had to be impressed thereupon. And thus it is with the Christian. Again, when I see the exquisite tea-service, I cannot but be reminded that there was a time when to all appearance it was but useless clay, which the passer by would have left unheeded; but the potter has power over the clay, and the mean substance in his hand was prepared and moulded into these vessels to the praise of the maker's name. It is even thus that God deals with the sinner.'

**II. Its Maker is God.**—That beautiful cup is not a self-made thing. The potter took the clay, tempered, moulded, baked, painted, and fired it, and then put his mark upon it. And the Christian is made, not by self or man, but by God. 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.' I have known a boy, in a day of grace, saying to his minister, 'Please will you convert me too,' forgetting that conversion is the work of God. 'I am one of your converts,' a man smelling of whisky once said to Rowland Hill. 'I can believe it,' replied Mr. Hill, 'you look very like my bungling work. Had you been one of God's converts, you would not have come to me half-drunk.'

**III. The Vessel's Use.**—Christ's vessels are all for use, none for ornament only; they are 'vessels unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use'. A great house has some chosen or choice vessels, preferred for their size, strength, or beauty. Such a vessel was the Apostle, great in mind and heart, most serviceable and beautiful from his glad devotion to Christ. 'He is a chosen vessel unto Me'—My creation and property—'to bear (or carry) My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and children of Israel.' Christ's name was the water of life for the perishing, the healing balsam for men's deadly wounds; and the Apostle was the vessel in which that heavenly treasure was carried round and offered to all. No other vessel in Christ's house has been more used and honoured. Yet the humblest vessel has its use. A poor broken cup may hold the water that saves the life of a dying man, and the humblest Christian may carry Christ's name to a perishing sinner.

**IV. The Vessel's Beauty.**—Our makers of vessels strive to unite the useful and the beautiful; their aim is to cast a thing of use in beauty's mould. Vessel is a name usually given to the finest ware, and a 'chosen vessel' suggests rare beauty. Our text may mean that Christ's name was to be carried *on* as well as in the vessel: 'to bear My name before (not merely to) the Gentiles and kings'; just as the costly vases in palaces bear the name and fame of the maker before kings.

Bernard Palissy, the French potter—a noble Christian and Protestant martyr—once saw a white enamelled or glazed cup, and resolved to discover the secret of so beautifying vessels. He spent all his money and sixteen years of his life in making the discovery. He was often at death's door, had burnt all his furniture for fuel, and his body was lean and dried up from hard work. At last he made some of the chosen vessels, and these have borne his name among nations and kings even to this day. Thus Paul bore his Creator's name far and wide, and multitudes 'glorified God in Him'. A life so ennobled by grace moved men to honour the grace that ennobled it. 'For this cause,' he says, 'I obtained mercy, that in me first (or to begin with) God might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern.' He was a specimen or sample of what God's grace could do with the most unlikely materials. The Maker's name was *both on and in* that chosen vessel.

If potters have done so much to clothe clay with beauty, shall they not condemn us if we do not earnestly seek to have the beauty of the Lord our God upon us? If a heathen philosopher reproached a rich man with having silver plate and earthenware principles, should we not reproach ourselves that we are so eager to possess every sort of beauty, except the beauty of the soul? When shall the 'beauty of holiness' find as passionate admirers as the beauty of art has in all our cities? Thousands almost worship what they fondly call 'the fine arts'. If those arts are by way of distinction 'the fine arts,' this I am discoursing on is surely the finest art under heaven.



Many there be who say, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,' and 'the whole world without art would be a great wilderness'. Yes, a thing of beauty, like this chosen vessel, is a joy for ever to its possessor and to all beholders who know its worth. And without the art of creating Christ's chosen vessels this world were a wilderness, full of sin and misery, and overrun with the rank growths of hell.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 227.

## RHODA

ACTS XII. 13, 16.

RHODA and Miriam are the only two girls of the Bible whose names we know. Rhoda was evidently an earnest Christian, and occupies an important place in the records of the early Church. The mention of her name, the memorial of her life, and the fragrance of her service, are abiding marks of her precious testimony for Jesus. Rhoda means a rose, the emblem of beauty, sweetness, and fragrance, and these certainly were some of the features of Rhoda's character.

On a girl's tombstone in France there is a rose nicely carved upon it, with these words underneath: 'She was just like that'. And this is the picture the Holy Spirit has drawn of Rhoda in the New Testament. A bright, beautiful blessing, 'She being dead yet speaketh'.

**I. Rhoda was a True Christian.**—But you ask, How do you know? She was in fellowship with the Church. The Lord only added living souls (Acts iv. 47). She was interested in the prayer-meeting—prayer, the evidence of life (Acts ix. 11). She was glad when Peter was released; Christian love a family mark; grace, life, and fellowship, all true marks of a real Christian.

**II. Rhoda was a Careful Christian.**—She was placed on guard. No doubt she was set to watch and listen by the Church whilst they prayed. There were many enemies about (Acts xii. 1). She used her ears well. She hearkened carefully (Mark xiii. 33). She used her tongue wisely. She asked who was there (margin). She was very quick. She recognised Peter's voice. Grace makes us wise. Danger makes us careful, and love makes us quick.

**III. Rhoda was a Warm-hearted Christian.**—'She opened not the gate for gladness.' Rhoda got a little excited, still there was real joy. Her whole soul responded to the fact that prayer was answered, and Peter was released. There were three good reasons for Rhoda's gladness. Rewarded faith, answered prayer, and relieved anxiety. These blessings are always means of great joy and happiness (Acts v. 41).

**IV. Rhoda was an Active Christian.**—'She ran and told how Peter stood before the gate.' She had a quick ear, warm heart, nimble feet, and a ready tongue, all alive for Jesus. The outward evidences of a soul full of the love and joy of Jesus. Just the grace the two disciples had in Luke xxiv. 27, 41. If we are not like this, let us breathe that oft-repeated

prayer in Psalm cxix. 25, 'Quicken thou me according to Thy word'.

**V. Rhoda was a Useful Christian.**—She was most useful to the Church *then*, and has been ever since. It was only very humble service, but it has been recognised and recorded by the Holy Spirit. It is a guide and pattern for every follower of Jesus. It was wise, hearty, helpful, happy service for the Lord. So every Christian, young or old, with head clear, heart warm, soul glad, faith strong, feet shod, and the tongue touched by the Holy Ghost, can do wonders for the Church and the world too. The Lord give us the Divine touch.—C. EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folk*, p. 81.

## A SUNSET ON THE HILLS OF CANAAN

'David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers.'—ACTS XIII. 36.

The verse from which I am now to speak to you tells us, among other things—

**I. The Way to Die Happy.**—Death has been spoken of, to those who are unprepared, as 'the King of terrors'. But of this King of Israel it is here said, 'He fell asleep'.

How was death to him thus so peaceful as to be compared to a little child closing its eyes and sinking into slumber on its mother's knees?

I think it was—I am sure it was—because he was enabled, in early years, when amid the flocks and sheep-folds of Bethlehem, to give his young heart to God. As I looked down when in Palestine on the valley of that name, I could not help recalling the youthful warbler who once was there with his simple pastoral reed-pipe, before he could procure the golden harp of after years. I thought of him by day amid the bleatings of his flock singing songs to Israel's God. And then, when the evening shadows fell, and the beautiful stars came out; when the sheep and lambs were all folded; when the birds had gone to their leafy cradles, and the great Temple of nature was silent; how that boy-minstrel loved to break the stillness with these loveliest night-Psalms ever penned: 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork'. 'When I consider Thy heavens the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained!' If he had not then learnt to love and praise and serve the great Creator, who had made him and redeemed him, he would not—he could not—have left the world so happy. It was because, when he was yet the age of many I now address, he had learnt to sing, 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' that he could plead when he was old and grey-headed, 'O God, forsake me not' (Ps. lxxi. 17), and that when he came to lie on a death-bed in his royal palace, he could take down the harp of Zion, and warble so sweet a farewell as we are told he did. Do you remember the words of that death-song?

You will find it in 2 Samuel xxiii. 5: 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all

things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire'.

Or listen yet again to what the dying King, at the same solemn moment, says about men who 'rule in the fear of God' (2 Sam. xxiii. 4): 'He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds!'

Seek in the morning of existence to love and serve God, if you wish, when you die, to 'fall asleep' in the 'everlasting arms' (Deut. xxxiii. 27). David, when he came, as he did, bitterly to mourn his great sins, would, I doubt not, have given his crown and sceptre and riches, and all that he had, to get back the bliss of a pure heart and a life unstained with crimson and scarlet guilt. Keep far out of the way of temptation. Try to do nothing that would cloud the beauty of your after years. Live holy if you would die happy.

II. The text tells, that **All of you Have an Influence either for Good or for Evil.**—David, though as I have just said at one time he fell unhappily into sad sin, yet *mainly* his life was an influence for good. He 'served his own generation' by 'doing the will of God'. As a Sun, he gladdened many with his beams. Many rejoiced in his light.

III. I shall add a third thought, though it is not told us in the text. It is this: **That You all Have an Influence in the World after you Die.** David, we are here specially told, influenced the generation among which he lived. But did he do no more? His influence remained after his death too.

This is surely a solemn reflection—that after death, when earth is left for ever, and when people gather round the grave of this one and that one and say of them '*They are gone*,' it is not so. In a true sense of the word *they still live*.

Seek to live, that *while* you live, by loving ways and loving acts, the world may be the better for you; and that when you die, a good example—good thoughts and words and deeds—shall be left behind you; and thus, if I may repeat the illustration I have used before, like Mary's broken box of spikenard, the whole little home and circle of your influence may be filled with the odour of the ointment.

'The child Samuel,' we read (to return once more to David's old and kind friend), 'grew, and not a word fell to the ground.' That saying has a solemn meaning regarding us all—(1) Not a word of *good* falls to the ground. (2) Not a word of *evil* falls to the ground. Our characters, good or bad, survive, and live on for ever!

IV. There is one other thing of which the text reminds us. **All Must Die.**—David 'fell on sleep'. Great man as he was—king though he was: though he sung many sweet Psalms, though beloved by God and honoured by men—yet the summons came at last, 'Put up thy harp, and be gathered to thy fathers'; and '*He died*'. David had stormed and taken many strongholds, but he could not storm or take the stronghold of Death! He was proud of the 'House of his armour' in the royal palace—the shields and spears,

the bucklers and helmets of his mighty men, that hung in his cedar gallery, but they were all unavailing to resist or vanquish 'the Last Enemy'. The harp that charmed away the evil spirit from Saul was powerless at that solemn closing scene!

Live to God as long as you live; and then it matters not whether your years be few or many. Even a very brief existence, if it has been loving and gentle, and unselfish and good, will not have been in vain. Cut short in this world, it will be continued in that world to come where death cannot enter. I like to think of that verse in Psalm xci. The words may apply to a young, just as much as to an aged Christian, 'He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a *long life*; even length of days for ever and ever!'—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 64.

### SINGING IN A STRANGE PLACE

'And the prisoners heard them.'—ACTS XVI. 25.

SOME of the best men the world has ever seen have spent their time in prison. There was that friend of all children, the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, who lived for twelve years in a prison. Joseph, you remember, spent long and dreary years in the prison of Egypt. Jeremiah the prophet was not only put in prison, but let down into a miry pit in the centre of it, and nearly killed there. Daniel and the three Hebrew children were put in prison. Peter the Apostle was shut up in prison, till the angel came and opened the prison gates and let him out.

But none of the great heroes of the Bible was more familiar with the inside of prisons than the Apostle Paul; and to-day we have to consider one of the strangest scenes of his prison life.

I. **The Singers.**—Here, then, the two servants of God were immured. The heavy doors were shut upon them; the darkness surrounded them; the fetid odours of the dungeon rose and caught their breath; their backs leaned against the damp wall; their feet could not be moved; their wounds, in which the clotted blood was hardening, rent them with pain; and in their hearts there was the bitter sense of wrong, for they knew that they had been imprisoned for no crime, but for a deed of kindness. And outside their cell door, in the large outer room, the blackguards and vagabonds of Philippi, who had been imprisoned for all sorts of crimes, kept up a din, with oaths and coarse laughter and ribald songs.

But the hours wore by, and the night fell over the city and over the prison. The darkness in the cell of Paul and Silas could not be deepened; but in the room outside the red glow faded from the window, and the noise of the prisoners sank to silence, as they flung themselves on their pallets to sleep. The gaoler and his family were asleep; the prisoners in the large room were all asleep; midnight and silence and sleep enveloped the prison building.

But what sound is this which steals out in the silent midnight? It fills the large room where the prisoners are sleeping. One after another awakes;

he never heard such music before; he sits up on his couch and listens. Is it angels pouring their songs on the midnight, like those who sang on the plains of Bethlehem? Where can it be coming from? Is it possible that it is coming out of the inner prison? Are these two broken, bleeding men, whom they had seen thrust in there, singing?

Yes; it was even so! Paul and Silas could not sleep. Their smarting wounds would not allow them. But how did they spend the long and heavy hours? In complaining to each other of their misery? In cursing the injustice of those who had imprisoned them? In weeping and groaning over their pains?

No, no; they talked to each other cheerfully and pleasantly, until they forgot their misery and their wounds; they prayed together, until they felt as if they were in heaven rather than in a dungeon; and at last their hearts grew so full and so happy that they could no longer restrain themselves, but broke out together into the song which awakened their fellow-prisoners.

But what was it which made them able to be joyful and to sing for joy in such circumstances? It was not that they were brave men, though they were very brave. It was not that their friendship for each other was so strong that they were able to drive care away from each other's minds, though they were the best of friends. These things would not have been sufficient to make them triumph over pain and gloom and wrong as they did. What was it, then? I think I know. There was a third person in the cell. If the gaoler had opened the door and looked in, he would not have seen Him. But Paul and Silas saw Him. It was Jesus. He was with them; and His presence and His love made the midnight bright, and changed the clasp of the stocks into perfect freedom, and made them forget their pains and their wrongs, and changed the dungeon into a temple, and the groans of pain into psalms of praise. It was for His sake they had been beaten and imprisoned, and that was enough. He was with them, and all was well.

**II. The Listeners.**—Our text says, 'The prisoners heard them,' but it ought to say, 'The prisoners listened to them'. They sat up on their pallets, and tried to catch the strange sounds. They rose and crept to the door of the dungeon, and bent their heads towards it, eager to catch every word. There they stood, an awe-stricken group, listening breathlessly in the darkness.

The silence and the midnight hour heightened the effect. Have you ever heard a nightingale sing? If you have not, you cannot conceive what a flood of song it is, twittering and shaking, and piping and soaring, running over all the notes of the scale from the lowest to the highest. But much of the extraordinary effect of this bird's music is due to the circumstance I have just alluded to, that it sings at night, when all the other songsters of the grove are hushed, when the world is wrapped in silence, and the mind, undistracted by the sights and sounds of

the daytime, can listen with all its faculties. So the Psalms of the Apostles gained much of their effect from the silence and the midnight hour.

What chiefly riveted the prison audience was wonder at the joy and cheerfulness of Paul and Silas. This was the miracle. How, after the treatment they had received, and in the circumstances in which they were, could sounds so calm, so cheerful, so joyful come from them? What was the secret these two men possessed? The prisoners knew they had nothing which could make them glad in such circumstances. They had sought happiness in revelry and abandonment, but they had discovered none like this.

Ah, this is what always rivets the attention of sinners, when they see that Christians have a joy that is far better than any other happiness in the world. I wish Christians would let the bird which sings in their breast be heard by others as well as themselves.

There is an exquisite sketch written by the hand which penned the immortal story of *Rub and his Friends*, and now, alas! lies still for ever in the grave, of a quaint old character of other days, well known to Dr. Brown, because he was his father's beadle. The sketch is written with the love and humour of which the author's heart was full; and among other traits of his humble friend he gives this touching one. He had been married in his youth, but after a year his wife and their one child died together; but always afterwards he kept up the practice of family worship, though quite alone, giving out the Psalm and the chapter, as if his dear wife had been there. He lived in a high story in the Canonigate, and his voice, in the notes of Martyrdom or Coleshill, sounded morning and evening through the thickly tenanted land; and many a careless foot was arrested and many a heart touched by that strange sound. I hope there are doors in our large blocks of houses where the passers-by are impressed by the same grave sweet melody.

I wish you to sing. Ah, but I wish most of all that you should have the joy which gives birth to song. It is the heart, and not the throat, in which song has its true habitation. It is in this cage the bird of song resides. When you sing of free grace and dying love, do you feel what you are singing? Do you feel these things so much that you cannot help singing? This is the right kind of song. If you can sing thus, then you will sow the seeds of joy wherever you go, and you will see them springing up in the new and happy lives of those who listen to you.—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 168.

#### GOD, THE MODEL GIVER

'He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.'—ACTS XVII. 25.

**I. God is a Cheerful giver.**—Jesus said to His disciples; 'Freely ye have received—freely give'. But when He said they 'received freely,' He meant to show the way in which God gives. All that we receive we receive from Him. 'He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' And all that He gives, He gives freely. He gives us life. But when



the baby first begins to live, what does it have to pay for its life? Nothing. He gives us breath; and as we open our mouths to draw it in—what do we have to pay for it? Nothing. He gives us sunshine; and what do we have to pay for it? Nothing. He gives us pure, sparkling water from hundreds of springs and fountains, bubbling from the earth; and what do we have to pay for them? Nothing. He sent His blessed Son to die for us, and to 'open the kingdom of heaven to all believers'; and what do we have to pay for Christ's entrance into our world, to save it? Nothing at all. What God gives to us, He gives freely. And this is the reason why God expects us to give as St. Paul says: 'Not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver'. He loves to have us give cheerfully, because this is the way in which He gives to us. God gives freely, or cheerfully, because He loves to give. And this is the only reason you can name why God gives at all. He is not *obliged* to give. If He should stop giving, no one could help it; and no one would have right to complain. But He gives because He loves to give. And when we do anything from love, we always do it freely, or cheerfully. God is the model Giver, because He gives cheerfully. And we find beautiful examples of those who are trying to imitate the model of giving, which He sets before us, by giving cheerfully.

*The baptised pocket-books.*—Some time ago a rich merchant, who was going to join a Baptist Church, was about to be baptised, as they are accustomed to do it, by immersion, or plunging the whole body under water. One of his friends, who saw his pocket-book in his pocket, suggested that he had better take it out before going down into the water. But he shook his head and said, 'No, no; I want my pocket-book to be baptised too!'

He meant by this, to say, that he wished it to be understood that all his money, and everything he had, belonged to God. There are too many people who get baptised themselves, but their pocket-books are *not* baptised. They do not feel as if all that they have belongs to God. When people do feel in this way, and really have their pocket-books baptised, they will be *cheerful* givers.

II. God is a 'Valuable' Giver.—And on *this* account, too, we may well speak of Him as the model Giver.

'He giveth to all *life*, and *breath*, and all things.' What a valuable gift the gift of life is! This is so valuable that no one in all the universe has the power to bestow it in any case, but God Himself. Wherever life is found existing, from the mightiest archangel to the tiniest insect, it is there as the gift of God. All the wisest, and best, and greatest men that ever lived could not bestow the gift of life on any creature. All the angels of heaven could not give life to the smallest worm or insect. The life of an angel—the life of a human being—or of any meaner creature—is what none but God can give. 'But He giveth to *all—life.*'

Let us look at some examples of this sort of giving. The first illustration I have under this head is a very nice one. It may be called—

*The consecrated diamonds.*—This story is told of the Princess Eugenia of Sweden. She is an earnest Christian lady, and has for years been trying to do good among her people. She spends her summers at a beautiful home on the island of Gotthland. When there, she is accustomed to spend a good deal of her time in visiting among the poor. While doing this, she became very much interested in behalf of a number of poor women who were suffering from complaints which could not be cured. And she felt the more for these poor sisters in their sorrow, because she herself was suffering in the same way. After thinking over it a good while, the idea came into her mind, how nice it would be to have a hospital home for those poor women. Yes, indeed! but where was the money to come from! She was a princess, it is true, but she was already engaged in so many works, that all the money she could spare from her income was spent, and it would take a good deal to build this hospital. Still she kept on thinking about it, and wishing that it could be done. And you know the old proverb says, 'Where there's a will, there's a way'. And so it proved here.

One day while thinking about it, the question came into her mind, 'Why can't I sell my set of diamonds for this purpose?' She asked God to guide her. Then she consulted her brother—the King of Sweden—about it. He gave his consent.

The diamonds were sent to London, for the Swedish Ambassador to sell them. They were sold for many thousands of dollars. The money was sent back to the princess. The hospital home was built, and filled with poor sick women.

Several years passed away. The summer was drawing to a close. The time had come for the princess to leave her summer retreat, for her winter home in the city. She was going through the hospital to say 'Good-bye' to the patients. As she entered one of the rooms the matron pointed to a particular bed, saying, 'The old woman who occupies that bed used to be the hardest of all our patients to manage. Please speak a few kind words to her. You will find her wonderfully changed now.'

The princess went to this bed and spoke to the sufferer, who was now very near her end. 'These were the poor woman's words to her: 'I thank God that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin—and that *He has cleansed mine.*' As she said this the tears were running fast down her cheeks. They were the tears of gladness, which told of the gratitude she felt to Jesus for His love. The light of heaven was glistening in them. In speaking of them afterward, the princess said, 'In those tears I saw my diamonds again'. That is true. Yes! and when Jesus shall give her the crown of glory, which she will wear for ever in heaven, she will see those diamonds, in that crown, sparkling more beautifully than any ever seen in an earthly crown. It was

a valuable gift which the Princess Eugenia gave, when she sold her diamonds in order to build that hospital.

*The bag of farthings.*—They were taking up their anniversary collection one day at a Sunday school in England, when a little boy, about seven years old, put a bag on the plate that felt quite heavy. The collector opened it, and found that it contained two hundred and eighty-five farthings! And where do you think the little fellow got all those farthings! He hadn't found them; he hadn't begged them. No; but he had *earned* them. And how! Why, his mother was a poor widow, and kept a little store. He used to run errands for his mother, and she let him keep all the farthings he received in change at the different stores to which he went. Instead of spending those farthings in buying candy, or fruit, or playthings, he kept them till their anniversary day came, and then he put them in the collection, which they always had on those occasions, for the missionary cause. That bag of farthings made up about six shillings of English money. They would make about a dollar and a half in our money. It was a valuable gift which that little boy offered in his bag of farthings.

**III. God gives 'Self-denying' Gifts.**—God is so great, and so rich; He has such an abundance of everything, that we do not think of what He gives as involving any self-denial on His part. And it is true that when He gives life, and breath, and such like things, *they do not cost Him self-denial.* But when He gives the blessings of His grace, and His salvation, *then,* He is giving us that which cost Him more than we can ever tell. Before the least of these blessings could be bestowed on us it was necessary for God to give up His only begotten Son to death; even the death of the cross. This is what the Apostle Paul teaches us when he says: 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' When God gave His Son for our redemption He gave Him to be out of heaven, and away from His own bosom, for more than thirty years. He gave Him to pass through untold sufferings, and to die a dreadful death of shame and agony. And this was a gift that involved such self-denial as we can never know. And we may well speak of Him as 'the Model Giver,' because when He bestows upon us the blessings of His grace and Gospel, He is giving us that which cost Him wonderful self-denial.

God, the model Giver, denied Himself by giving His Son to die for us; and we should strive to imitate the model He sets for us by giving in the same way. —RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 256.

### THE CHURCH AND THE CHILDREN

'And they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we knelt down on the shore and prayed.'—ACTS XXI. 5.

WHEN we closely study Luke's words we find in them many warm touches of life. The scene had been photographed upon his gratified heart, and he writes

as if his eye were resting on all its little details. His words, literally translated are, 'And we going out through the gate . . . knelt down on the pebbly or sandy shore'. As he writes he sees the city gate through which they passed, and the peculiarities of the shore on which they knelt. I found there, outside the city—'out of the city'—a long range of sandy shore, with many sandy hillocks, amid which you could find many a quiet sanctuary for a little prayer-meeting, shut out from the world, and open only heavenwards. Luke mentions the children, and this is the first notice of children in the Acts of the Apostles. That little company on their knees were as one man, with one heart's desire and prayer. We may be sure that their prayers were not read out of a book, but that they were the outpourings of their own hearts, shaped by their own needs. 'And when we had taken leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.' Luke remembers well that leave-taking, and how on the deck he watched the retreating, lessening forms of his home-going friends. Perhaps they climbed the highest tower in Tyre and watched the flying ship. It soon became a speck, and then melted out of sight, and these friends never met again on earth. No doubt they felt the pathos of such a parting.

I wish to study with you—

I. Paul with the children.

II. The children with Paul.

**I. Paul with the Children.**—I. He *respected* them. Natural enough as this scene appears to us, it would seem very strange and ridiculous in heathen Tyre. The idea of two teachers having women and children among their disciples, would give the sages of Tyre much and genuine laughter. Think of Plato, or Socrates, or Cicero in such fine company! This scene was thoroughly original, and no scene like it could be found to-day in heathen or Mohammedan lands. In Cairo neither females nor children are allowed to pray in a mosque, or even to be present at a time of prayer. In North Africa lately a missionary told the chief that he wished to teach the women to read. The chief laughed loudly and said, 'My horse is more intelligent than any woman in my tribe; you had better teach my horse to read.'

The Bible everywhere shows a warm side to the children. It surrounds every young life with a sacred interest and dignity. It teaches us that every child is a young immortal, made in God's image, and of greater worth than all the material glories of earth and sky. It reverences the young, not only for what they are, but also for what they may yet become and do. It everywhere breathes a passion to win them early for Christ. In this spirit the great Apostle had the children at his farewell prayer-meeting on the Tyrian shore.

2. Paul *sympathised* with the children. I am sure that they were very poor children; probably their fathers were sailors, or dock labourers, or slaves; but I am also sure that their poverty would not impoverish the Apostle's sympathy with them. He

sympathised with them intellectually. Profound theologian though he was, he had words and prayers for the young. He walked with them out of Tyre step for step, and probably hand in hand, and he knelt with them in prayer. All that is a parable. His mind as well as his body kept step with them. In both these respects he would consider the pace of the children as Jacob did when he said to Esau, 'I will lead on softly according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure' (Gen. xxxiii. 13, 14). Paul would not overdrive the tender mind or body. Though he spoke many things hard to be understood, he also spoke many things that children could understand; and he would speak them with a beautiful simplicity. The great truths of the Bible come to us as simple facts belonging to the life of Jesus Christ. Paul knew well the priceless value of the religion of Christ for these boys and girls kneeling by his side. The early Church had the same spirit, for she had the dolphin among her symbols. The reason was that the dolphin was fabled to have a special tenderness for her young.

3. And no doubt Paul was *hopeful* about them, for his mind was filled with the Old Testament. He thought of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as the family God and covenant God of His people, all whose promises were for the children as well as the parents. The fact that God's covenant of mercy had taken such remarkable notice of the children, and breathed such a spirit of generous hope regarding them, would work in him a kindred frame of mind. And then he had drunk in the spirit of Christ. He had also great faith in the upbringing and prayers of godly parents, and he would naturally expect the children of such parents as were kneeling with him to be Christians. Thus, I doubt not, the sight of these children made him thank God and take courage. They showed him that the cause of Christ had a great future, and he might delight in the idea of race handing on the name of Christ to race, and the rising generation carrying forward the work of their fathers. Such hopes as these were the very food of his soul, and would inspire the prayers he offered up amid the sand-dunes of Tyre.

II. *The Children with Paul.*—These children of Tyre made the same *profession* as Paul. Probably some of them were bigger boys and girls at the age when ridicule and laughter have the greatest power over us. As they walked through the city with Luke and Paul, I think it is very likely that their mischievous playfellows would point at them the finger of scorn, and fling at them many a stinging poisoned

taunt; but they kept in the sacred company, and joined in the prayer-meeting. It is possible that the children prayed too. Perhaps the prayer went round, as is done on Sabbath evenings in some Christian families, where every voice, from the youngest to the oldest, rises into the ear of their Father in heaven. It is good for children to learn to pray aloud when they are young. Because they have not learnt this lesson in youth, many grown-up people are terribly afraid of their own voices in prayer. Thousands between the ages of twelve and twenty are laughed and jested out of their best convictions and desires. Some naughty, godless companion has more power over them than all the teachings and prayers of a Christian mother or father. Oh, how sad! Pray God to make you loyal and true and strong, so that you shall never hide your colours. Modestly but firmly keep your ground. Be ashamed of shame, and feel that the highest honour in the world is to be on the side of Paul and of Paul's Master. Let your lives show that you are true worshippers, as were these little worshippers on the Tyrian shore.

Once more, these children were interested in the *work* of the Apostle. Their sympathies moved along with his, as their feet had done through the gate of Tyre and along the pebbly beach. Religion was not to them a dull soulless thing that somehow—they did not know how—had come down to them from far-back ages. It was a grand thing that had kindled their enthusiasm. Paul and Luke might seem to them far grander men than the Roman generals, than Caesar himself. The parents, I dare say, wished their children to have the image of Paul enshrined in their hearts; but be sure that Paul would not allow them to hero-worship him. He would point them past himself to his Master. These children would so far at least understand the errand of these two men, for whom so many touching prayers were that day offered up. The children would know that these Apostles were fighting against all that was bad and for all that was good; that they meant to overthrow cruelty and darkness, and bring light and joy to all men by teaching them how to live a blessed life on earth, and how to reach heaven at last.

You feel, I hope, that it is a grand thing to be a Christian, and to belong to such a society as Christ's Church. Like these children of Tyre, be you linked in heart and soul, even in boyhood and girlhood, with Paul and Luke and the blessed company of the faithful.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Object Lessons*, p. 231.



# ROMANS

## NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.'—ROMANS I. 16.

It is our great privilege to follow Christ. Let us not be ashamed of Him. There are two things which strike us in regard to a soldier's uniform: (a) the soldier knows he is wearing it; (b) it is seen. First, the soldier knows he is wearing it. In the same way we must know that we are wearing our Christian uniform, even Christ. It is surely one of the great facts of our faith that we have put on Christ; that, as St. Paul says in writing to the Corinthians, 'Ye are Christ's'; and again in writing to Timothy, 'I know Him whom I have believed'. It is a great reality to us to-day. It is a fact—we have put on Christ if we are true Christians. And now to the second thought.

**I. It is Seen.**—Just as the soldier's uniform is seen, and just as the wearing of it stamps him as a soldier; just as his red coat proclaims to the world at large that he is no longer a civilian, but that he has taken the Queen's shilling and been drafted into the Queen's service; so surely does our uniform have a like effect on those around us. They know Whose we are, and Whom we serve. They know that we are no longer ordinary people, but that we are set apart by the great Captain of salvation for His service. Will my hearers then realise these two things—will you apply them at this time to your lives? will you make them your own? And now we come to a further working out of our soldier life. The soldier who puts on for the first time his uniform has no idea of the life before him. He knows very little about his future. He simply finds it out by degrees. His uniform means to him barrack life and routine; it means drills, parades, reviews; it means perchance the being shipped off in a troopship for active service, and yet he doesn't realise all these things at once. They come by a gradual experience; so, when we put on our Christian uniform, we have little idea, if any, what it means to us; it is only by degrees that we understand what our Christianity signifies. But to go back to our illustration. Because the soldier doesn't know all that is before him, does he therefore sink into carelessness, self-indulgence and disobedience? By no means. He rather, by a faithful attention to duty, by a perfect obedience to the word of command, by a constant and unswerving attention to rules and regulations, strives to prepare himself for all the unknown future before him. Thus, then, the mere thought that we in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ know little of what is before us, should stimulate us to emulate the soldier's example, and do

our best by the most perfect obedience we can render to fit ourselves for the duties, the trials, the dangers that lie before us, ever striving to know more and more of our Captain as the great motive power of our lives. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.' What, then, is this gospel of which we are not to be ashamed? It is *Christ*, and it is further explained to us in 1 Corinthians i. 24, 'Christ the power of God'. Let us realise this: that we have the power of God to rely upon, to trust in.

**II. Any power to be of any use at all must be an Active Power.** We see this exemplified in the natural world, when we look at some mighty tree sending forth its green shoots at the call of spring, through the power which is within that giant trunk; we see it in the spiritual, when we see some great man following the paths of purity and holiness, impelled along by a power not his own, but God's. 'It is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.' Yes, the power must be an active power, but even an active power may be of no effect. Take as an illustration some great factory. There is the powerful engine at one end of the long room, there are all the looms waiting to be worked; the engine is at work, but the looms are still. Why is it? It is because there is no connection between the engine and the looms; there is active power in that great engine, but it is useless so far as the looms are concerned. So surely there may be 'Christ, the power of God,' but unless each of us take this power as our own, unless there is the connection between our lives and Christ, the active power which is in Him is of no use to us. And so we have in our text a condition attached to the attainment of this power—'to every one that believeth'. We must believe in order to apprehend. But surely this ought not to be difficult.

Do we believe, then, Christ to be the power? If we believe our Bibles to be true, we must acknowledge this to be a fact, for as we have seen, Christ is called 'the power of God'. So the power is a fact, Christ is a fact. Besides the simple statement in God's Word, we have many practical demonstrations to illustrate how easy such belief is. Look at that express train whirling along the metals—What a tremendous power there is behind it! Yet you can't see the power, but you believe in it because you see the effect of it. So, as we turn and gaze for a moment at the lives of men like Livingstone, Havelock or Gordon, we are conscious of the effect of the power of God upon their lives, and so we believe in the power. There is still another side to this power of God: it is not only *active*, but it is *continuing*.

It is 'unto salvation'. We look back on the past. Surely there is no power that can avail to cleanse our past from sin? Yes, 'Christ, the power of God'. 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseeth from all sin.' We turn once more to the present and the future. Difficulties, temptations, doubts, dangers, seem to surround us. And yet Christ, the power of God, is with us to direct, control, guide, and strengthen us, and we realise that this power of God is with us all our life through.—NORMAN BENNETT, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 75.

#### A STIRRING STORY

'Christ died for us.'—ROMANS V. 8.

THERE is a fine tale told of the old days before there was gunpowder, and when war was a simpler thing than it is now. The enemy came swooping down in the darkness and surrounded a lonely garrison, and hoped to shoot them down, or starve them into surrendering. Yet the soldiers in the garrison had friends, strong friends and many of them; only they couldn't tell them the danger they were in, or call for their help, without lighting the cresset fire which hung by its chain high up, where the enemy could see the man who tried to kindle it, and would shoot him down at the first spark he made. But if ever they were to be delivered that signal must be made; the cresset fire must be kindled.

One man at length stepped forth, and said he would fire the beacon. He knew what it meant; ah, yes! he knew; but he was ready, quite ready. He knelt and prayed, then sprang to his feet, grasped the torch, leapt on the ramparts, and climbed to the beacon, while a shower of arrows came whizzing upon him. But the beacon was fired; its flame shot up like a cry for help, and their friends understood it and marched to the rescue, and drove back the enemy, and delivered the garrison.

But the poor fellow who had kindled the beacon, where was he? Lying asleep in a soldier's grave. He had died to save his comrades.

Was there a soldier of them all who was saved that night who did not love and honour the man who had saved them? No, not one.

And 'Christ died for us'—died for you, died for me, died for everybody. Shouldn't we love Him? shouldn't we praise Him? shouldn't we live for Him? Ah, yes, we should!

If they could have brought the dead soldier to life again, wouldn't they have gladly made him their captain? They would, and so we should make Jesus the captain of our salvation, for He was brought to life again, and lives to bless us. Be brave, be true, be soldier-like, and stand up for the Lord, who 'died for us'.—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 14.

#### GOOD AND EVIL

(Preached on Passion Sunday)

'For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.'—ROMANS VII. 19.

I. THESE words were uttered by one of the most noble Christians the world has ever seen, by one who was

ready for the sake of Christ to go through weariness, painfulness, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness, fire and sword. There was nothing that St. Paul was not ready to undergo in running the race that was set before him, and yet with all his zeal, his tremendous powers of mind, his absolute steadfastness of purpose which never wavered, he seems to enter to the full into the same difficulties, trials, and temptations that we have to face. His flesh, like ours, was very weak and sinful, and he has continually to remind himself of the power of the Spirit to overcome that weakness. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' St. Paul's testimony is very real and true. He hides nothing; he places himself before us in all his natural weakness, but only that he may the more abundantly bring out the wondrous saving and keeping power of Christ. St. Paul's aim was always to help those who, like himself, were striving after whatsoever things were true. If by any means he could show his sympathy with suffering, sinful humanity, it was his one desire to do so. And so as we hear those words fall from his lips, 'The good that I would I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do,' we are conscious at once of a responsive echo in our hearts. Just as when some trumpet is blown among the mountain-tops the sound is heard passing from peak to peak until it is lost in the distance, so do the clarion notes of the great Apostle of the Gentiles find an answer in each of our hearts this day. We are conscious of sin, of weakness, of failure; we try often to realise more what it means to be a Christian, but often and often does such striving end in disappointment, in failure. Some sin has taken hold of us in the past, it has bound us round with its chains; we feel helpless, we feel hopeless, and we know not what to do. Is it not so with every one of us at different times in our lives? Yes; over and over again we have to face the words of St. Paul, and find out the truth of them: 'The good that I would I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do'. I wonder as I look round on your faces this morning what this Lent will then mean to you. Shall I try and put before you what it may mean if you will only use it aright? It may mean a great deal to you. The first lesson that it must teach us, then, is that we are *sinful*.

II. **Sinfulness, Proneness to Sin.**—This is one of the greatest lessons that we have to learn; to some people it means nothing. They seem to think that anything is good enough for God, and that sinfulness has no place in their experience. What, then, is sin? We have it defined very clearly for us over and over again. But one reference will suffice, in St. James iv. 17, 'To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin'. Here we have the foundation of sinfulness, the knowledge of good and the defiant choice of evil. When our conscience, then, tells us that a certain thing is right, and we omit to do it or do the exact opposite, we oppose the will of God, we commit sin—we choose evil rather than good.

And then, again, some seem to think that it is the amount of sin that brings a man under the condemnation of God; and yet it is not so, for if we turn to the tenth verse of the second chapter of St. James, we read: 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. The man who breaks the law must take the consequences of his own act; so those who break the laws of God whether in much or in little are likewise convicted of sin. Therefore, sinfulness is upon each one of us this morning; thoughts, words and deeds have during the past been filled with evil. We have a record of not one, but many sins, and unless Christ is able to save us, we have no hope. So, like St. Paul, let us turn to Him and say, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord'. The past may have been clouded with many sins, but 'if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. And then, again, we are confronted not only with our sinfulness, but with our weakness—the evil that I would not, that I do'.

III. How, then, will this time of Lent help us? Surely in this way: to look up to Him who is all strength, and ask Him to perfect His strength in our weakness. Just as Christ is willing to be our Saviour, so is He willing to be our strength. 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'—such was St. Paul's testimony, such also should be ours. The mere fact that we are unable to cope with sin ourselves should make us throw our whole trust and confidence upon Him. If we look to ourselves we fall, we are defeated; but if we look away from ourselves to Christ, then we are 'more than conquerors through Him that loved us'. We see Christ Himself as at this time led up into the Mount of Quarantine, on the confines of the valley of the Jordan, to be tempted of the devil; we see Him resisting the specious temptations of Satan, and we see Satan baffled and conquered, and we realise, 'In that He suffered being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted'. We are confronted with a power in Christ which is able to meet our every need. No temptation is too great. Everything which we feel Christ feels, and so in Him we have an all-sufficient Saviour; He makes perfect His strength in our weakness. There ought surely to be no such word as weakness in the true Christian's vocabulary, for 'when I am weak, then am I strong'. We realise that word of the Apostle Paul, 'Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. Where, then, is the room for weakness? Was Christ weak? Certainly not; for we read of Him, 'All power is given unto Me'.—*NORMAN BENNET, Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys, p. 94.*

#### OF THINKING TOO HIGHLY OF OURSELVES

ROMANS XII. 3.

'FOR I say unto you, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you: Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.' It was the Apostle Paul who said this. He says it in

his letter to the Roman Church. You cannot help feeling, in reading it, that he is very earnest in saying it. He had seen, as he went up and down among the Churches, that it was a thing which much needed to be said. Those were the first Churches, and the people who belonged to them had not been Christians long. There were many things they could not yet understand. And perhaps they did not yet understand that it could be a fault to do what all their lives before they had been doing, to think more highly of themselves than they ought. But, as I have said, Paul is very earnest in telling them that this thing ought not to be. And in another of his letters—his letter to the Philippian Church, he says what may be called the other half of what he said to those in Rome: 'Let each esteem other better than himself'. Paul saw that homes would be happier, and churches holier, and the whole world better, if only those two things could be done.

Now, as often as I read those words together, three thoughts come into my heart. First, I cannot help thinking how wonderful it is that things so simple as not thinking too highly of ourselves, and thinking more highly of others than of ourselves, should have such power as they have. Next, I think that they are things which everybody who is willing to try is able, by God's help, to do. And then I am filled with the thought of the exceeding goodness of God in putting such simple, such easy means of doing good into everybody's power.

I really believe, therefore, if the holy Paul were living now and had to speak to children, it would be such words as these he would speak: 'You need, just like the first Christians, to learn how simple and easy the rules of Christian life are; and how close to you, young though you be, lie powers of God by which you can be working for God and making those about you happy every day you live'. Therefore I take those words of Paul for my sermon for you to-day. I say unto you, through the grace given unto me, to every one who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. And I entreat you, with my whole heart, this very day to begin and let each esteem other better than himself.

It is misery to do anything else. The life that acts otherwise is the evil life of pride. It is pride that leads children to think no other children are as good as they. It is pride that makes it difficult to see the good that is in those around us. More than anything else in an evil heart is this evil of pride a sorrow to God. It blinds our eyes to the good that is in God Himself. It makes us haughty, and envious, and scornful. It leads to heartbreaks in families, and to quarrels in schools, and to hatred and wars with nations. It is such an evil that it can turn religion itself into a thing abominable to both God and man. It was pride that made the Pharisee who was praying beside the Publican in the Temple to say, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, or even as this Publican'.

It was my good fortune not long ago to hear told



by a friend some wonderful German stories.<sup>1</sup> And one of these brings out, so much better than I could do, the misery to which pride of this kind leads, that I shall try to re-tell it instead of preaching a sermon to you to-day.

In a certain German city, many, many years ago, lived a young man who was an organ-builder. Nobody could build such organs as his. And every new one he built was better than the one before. He was called the master-builder.

At last he built one that was better than all the rest. He called it the Wonderful Organ. It was so made that on certain occasions it could play of itself. The occasions when it could play of itself were when good, right-hearted, well-behaved young people came into the church to be married. As soon as two such young persons crossed the threshold of the church the organ began to play of its own accord. But if either the one or the other was bad, or had an evil pride in the heart, it did not play.

When the young master-builder finished this organ, and got it built into its place in the church, he said to himself, 'My fortune is made now, and I shall have a home of my own and a wife. And I will take my bride to the church in which my wonderful organ is. And as soon as we cross the threshold it will burst out into happy music, and all the people will say, "That is the wonderful organ, and this is the master who built it, and she who is beside him is his bride."'

So he went one day to seek a bride. He went to the fairest, kindest, most modest girl in all the city, and he said to her that he loved her and wished her to become his bride. And she gave him her love, and the day for the wedding was fixed.

It was a beautiful day, and the wedding guests were happy. But the bridegroom kept filling his heart with the thought, that so soon as he took his beautiful bride into the church his organ would begin to play, and all the people would say, 'Listen to the wonderful organ, and see! the builder of it is there'. His heart was filled with pride in his organ and himself, so that there was not room in it for any thought or feeling besides.

So the wedding company came to the church door, and the bridegroom and the bride passed in. But the organ did not play, and its silence went to the bridegroom's heart like a knife. 'Have I made a mistake in my choice?' he said to himself. 'Is this fair-looking maiden not fair, not good? Alas, for me this day!'

He did not once think that the evil which made his organ silent might be the evil of pride in himself. The smiles went out of his face; the joy went out of his heart; his warm hands got cold and clammy. He went through the wedding ceremony like a dead man. He did not touch the wedding breakfast; he did not say one kind word that whole day to his bride; he only kept brooding over the evil thought, that the fair young creature who had given him her

love was not fair, nor good, at heart. And with this evil thought in his soul he stole out so soon as the guests were gone and it was dark enough, and left his beautiful bride alone.

He went from street to street till he got outside of the walls. Then he took the road to a foreign country and walked all that night, and the night following, sleeping where he could by day. At last he came to a city in which he was not known, and there he took up his abode. And in that strange city he lived for many years; he lived till grey hairs were beginning to show themselves on his head. And still he thought that he was in sorrow and in hiding because there had been evil in his bride.

One day, however, when all those years had passed, there came into his heart a great longing to see his native city, and if it might be his bride also once more. He tried to put away the longing; but it would not be put away. So at length he said to himself, 'I will go back once more and look upon the organ and upon her'. And with that he rose and left the place in which he had been living so many years. And he turned his steps to the city in which he had left his wonderful organ and his bride.

At last he saw the spires of his native city in the distance, and by and by he was at its gates. So eager to enter it was he now that he had begun to run. And the people he passed turned round and looked at the stranger who was running as if for his life.

As he ran he met a funeral procession. The people walking in it were weeping, and the street along which it was passing was filled with people also weeping. 'Whose funeral is this?' he asked. 'It is the funeral of a saint, of one who has been as an angel in the city, so kind was she to the sick and the poor.' Then the people named her. It was his own bride. And, oh! then, in the poor man's soul, fell down the cruel wall which his pride had built, and which, for so many years, had kept him from seeing the spotless purity, the holy charity of his bride. Then when too late to ask her pardon, he beheld the worth he had wronged. And in that same moment he learned that it was the pride of his own heart which had stilled the organ on the wedding-day. He trembled from head to foot. A horror of shame and humiliation fell upon his soul, tears streamed from his eyes, and sobs burst from his breast. But he went forth among the pall-bearers and begged to be allowed to help. The people thought he was some poor workman whom their dead angel had helped. But now a wonderful thing took place. As the pall-bearers with the body crossed the threshold and passed forward into the church, the great organ, of its own accord, burst forth into an anthem of praise. It was too much for the poor organ-builder. Sick at heart because of his sin, and faint with his long journey, he sank exhausted at the base of a pillar. He had spoiled his life and the life of the dead one of whom he had not been worthy. Never now could he tell his sorrow. Never now could he give or receive her love. There was just one comfort. He knew that God had forgiveness for sinners

<sup>1</sup> By Professor Volkmann, of Halle.

as bad as he. And he seemed to hear in the tones of the organ the very tones of the forgiving God.

As the people were about to lower his bride's coffin into the grave, he was seen to grow white and to fall forward on the floor. Some who hurried to his help found that he was already dead. And by some token about his dress or person they discovered that this was the husband of the saint they had come to lay in the grave. And the teaching of God fell upon their hearts. They kept back the body of the bride. They prepared the dead husband for burial. And they laid them together in the same grave. And as the two bodies were being lowered into the grave, the organ of its own accord began to play. It played such an anthem as had never before been heard, of the most heavenly music. But after that it was never known to play of its own accord.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 55.

### A CAREFUL START

#### 'Principiis obsta.'

'Abhor that which is evil.'—ROMANS XII. 9.

SOME of you may remember the story that Virgil tells us about the priest of Troy and his two sons. You may even have seen the great group of statuary that represents the incident. The story goes that while they were standing by the seashore two great serpents came gliding over the surface of the deep, and laid hold, first, of one of the lads. The father went to his rescue, and it seemed an easy task to untwist the snake; but presently it wound itself more firmly about their limbs, and before long the three became knotted in a hopeless entanglement of the serpents' coils, and after a terrible struggle were slain together by their cruel tormentors.

I. That old-world story is just a picture of what may happen to every one of us if we allow sin to lay hold of our life. Tennyson has called us 'the fools of habit,' and, indeed, it is often surprising how foolish people can be about admitting bad habits into their life; they see the evil effects that these things have wrought on the lives of other people, but they never seem to imagine that the same sad consequences will take place in themselves. We cannot be too careful about the kind of guest we admit into the inner chambers of our heart. It would be easy enough were all these things ugly and hateful at first sight; but often the most dangerous are the most attractive. Perhaps you have seen in the hedgerows in summer a pretty wild plant with lovely clusters of berries, red like coral; it is called the Barberry, and at the back of its leaves you may sometimes find a number of pretty little round yellow cups. In these cups there is a kind of powder which the wind scatters over the fields, and should it come in contact with the growing wheat it will change the beautiful ears of grain into black, ugly, useless, hurtful ones. There are many subtle and in themselves seemingly beautiful dangers that surround the harvest-fields of our life. The wind of temptation and the soft blowing breezes of the world carry the poison with them,

and if we are not very careful the evil may be wrought in our own lives before we are conscious of it.

II. On the other hand, things often look much more terrible before we tackle them than they are when we boldly face them. Oftentimes there is nothing so dangerous as to dally with an evil, and approach it in a half-shrinking manner. The old adage applies in many circumstances:—

If you gently touch a nettle  
It will sting you for your pains.  
Grasp it like a man of mettle,  
And it soft as silk remains.

Tennyson tells a story in his tales of Arthur's court of how four brothers held a certain castle. Three of them stationed themselves in the passes that led to it, and challenged all comers. At last one of the knights overcame the three and reached the castle walls, where he had to face his last encounter. When his echoing challenge, thrice repeated, sank into silence there issued from a black pavilion, mounted on a night-black steed, a huge and gruesome figure of Death, who advanced in grim silence, not uttering a sound. Terror struck into every heart, and even the bravest felt an icy chill of strange dread. But in the onslaught Death was 'cast to ground,' and when the conqueror clove his helmet there 'issued the bright face of a blooming boy'. He had been compelled to play the strange rôle by his brethren, who were confident his life would never be risked, and that the supernatural horror would protect him. Many evils are like that grim figure. They seem very dreadful at first, but when one deals with them bravely and faces the foe with prompt courage, the reality is found to be much less awful than our imagination had pictured.

III. We must be careful also about the beginnings we make. Everything depends on them. 'A task well begun is half done,' the proverb says, and the reason is that a good method of starting secures our carrying on the work more easily. To learn the art of music under a good teacher from the commencement will save much trouble and loss of time. Bad methods would make it necessary to unlearn much, as well as compel us to begin afresh and cover much old ground again. The formation of all habits is of the same nature. Let us start with good ones, and we are halfway to the building up of fine characters. Let us grow a crop of bad ones, and the garden of our soul must first be weeded before we can hope for a show of fair flowers.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 26.

### DEARLY BELOVED, AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES

ROMANS XII. 19.

I HAVE not required to search for a lesson to you this morning. One has come to me and to all in our neighbourhood from the playground. Two boys playing at marbles. A misunderstanding arose; then a quarrel, a blow; and then in answer to the blow a stone; then death.

The one struck by the stone was killed.

I am sorry for the boy who was killed, but I am very much more sorry for the boy who threw the stone. I am sure he did not mean to kill his companion. That never entered into his thoughts. Only he was angry at being struck; he was mad angry, and lifted the stone and threw it, and death stepped on to the playground.

It is all so pitiful.

Boys at play; angry words; blows; stones; then death; then the awful, awful thought of the survivor, 'I have killed my playmate'; then the inquest, then the police-court, and, above all, the agony in two homes.

Now what is the lesson? It is the one I have read to you:—

'Do not avenge yourselves.'

It is terribly hard to keep down the hand when you have been struck; when you are smarting from some hard blow, and put to shame, and some companions near are laughing, it is one of the hardest things you can do to keep from hitting back.

There are some people who will say: 'If you don't hit back, you are a *coward*, you are afraid'. And I have seen many a blow given because that was said.

Now I say: 'Don't hit back. Don't avenge yourself.'

Through and through it is the best way.

An old elder, a dear friend of mine, was wont to say: 'Better be sinned against than be the sinner. Better endure evil done to you than do evil yourself.'

Our Lord said: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.'

I know there are some questions put, such as, 'If robbers should come?' But we are not talking of robbers in this lesson.

Or if the striker should be striking some child, some girl, or some weak old person? We are not considering that either.

There are different cases. You may strike down robbers when you can, and you sometimes might have to strike brutal people when they are striking others. Even then, it is often best to get the magistrate to strike. Better if Moses had not killed the Egyptian. But when you are struck yourself, don't hit back. Never mind what people standing by say about cowardice. It is not cowardice to refuse to do evil or folly. If this boy had not struck back, how much happier he would have been to-day! How much braver it would have been to bear! It is nobler to yield, even when you are in the right.

We all know a good deal about Mr. Wesley, but we do not all know that the virtue of patience was one of his greatest excellences.

It is well known that Joseph Bradford was for some years the travelling companion of Mr. Wesley,

for whom he would have sacrificed health, and even life, but to whom his *will* would never bend except in meekness. 'Joseph,' said Mr. Wesley one day, 'take these letters to the post.' 'I will take them after preaching, sir,' said Joseph. 'Take them now, Joseph.' 'I wish to hear you preach, sir; and there will be sufficient time for the post after service.' Mr. Wesley said: 'I insist upon your going now, Joseph.' Joseph: 'I will not go at present, sir.' 'You won't?' 'No, sir.' 'Then you and I must part.' 'Very good, sir.' The good men slept over it. Both were early risers. At four o'clock the next morning the refractory helper was accosted with: 'Joseph, have you considered what I said, that we must part?' 'Yes, sir.' 'And we must part?' 'Please yourself, sir.' 'Will you ask my pardon, Joseph?' 'No, sir.' 'You won't?' 'No, sir.' 'Then I will ask yours, Joseph.' Poor Joseph was instantly melted; smitten as by the rod of Moses; and forth gushed the tears, like the water from the rock.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 70.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST SELFISHNESS

'We . . . ought . . . not to please ourselves.'—ROMANS XV. 1.

IF we ask ourselves the question what sort of a thing selfishness is? we shall find that there are *three* things about it, each of which furnishes a good reason why we should mind the Bible warning against it.

I. In the First Place, Selfishness is an Ugly Thing.—And this is a good reason why we should mind the warning against it.

One thing that helps to make our bodies look pleasing, or beautiful, is when the different parts, like the head, or the hands, or the feet, are all of a proper size, or shape. But suppose we should see a boy, or a girl, ten or twelve years old, with a head as big as a bushel measure; with feet as large as an elephant's; or with hands ten times as large as they ought to be; should we say that their bodies were beautiful? No, every one who saw them would say how ugly they were! A body of which the head, or the hands, or the feet are allowed to grow out of their proper size must always be ugly.

And it is just the same with our souls when we give way to wrong feelings. This makes one part of the soul become larger than it ought to be. Then its proper shape or proportion is lost, and this must make the soul ugly, just as it does the body. If we give way to pride, it will have this effect; and so will anger, and so will selfishness. There is nothing perhaps that makes a person look so ugly and disagreeable as giving way to selfishness.

'The unselfish school boy.'—His name was Arthur Campbell. He was about nine years old. One Saturday afternoon his mother said to him: 'Arthur, my dear boy, do you think you can practise a lesson in self-denial this afternoon, for the good of another person?'

'I don't know, mother, but at any rate I can try. What is it you mean?'

'Why, you know, little Susan Gray wants to go



to Sunday-school to-morrow. But she can't go in her old ragged clothes; so I am making her a frock, a cape, and a bonnet in order that she may go. I shall have to work till late this evening to get them done. This is what I expected to do. But your father has just sent in a long account to be added up before tea-time. If I attend to this account I can't finish the clothes. Now the question is, shall poor Susan go without her clothes for another week, or will my dear boy give up his play this afternoon and cast up these accounts for me?'

Arthur hesitated a moment. Then he ran upstairs to his own little room. He shut the door, and then burst into tears. 'What shall I do?' he said to himself. 'I only come home from school on Saturdays, and go back on Mondays. If I give up flying my kite this afternoon, I shall have to wait a whole week before I can get another chance to fly it. And then it's my new kite, and a real beauty; and this is such a royal breezy day for it; and so many of the fellows will be out with their kites this afternoon; and I do so want to show them mine. And yet I know poor little Susan has looked forward to going to Sunday-school to-morrow, and she will be dreadfully disappointed not to go. What shall I do?' Then he knelt down, and asked God to guide him in this matter, and help him to do what was right. When he rose from his knees these words of our Saviour came into his mind: 'As ye would that men should do to you, even so do to them'. This settled the question. Dashing away the tears from his eyes, he put his new kite safely away in the closet for another week, and going downstairs to his mother, he said: 'Rather than little Susan shall be disappointed, I will give up my kite-flying, mother dear, and will stay home and settle those accounts'.

His mother stooped down to kiss him. As she did so he felt the warm tear-drops from her eyes fall upon his cheek. They were tears of gladness, to see her dear boy minding the Bible warning against selfishness. And Arthur was much happier that afternoon than if he had been flying his kite in the fields. But the next day, when he saw little Susan Gray in church, with her new clothes on, and looking as pleased and happy as possible, Arthur felt more real pleasure than all the kites in the country could have given him.

Now Arthur's noble conduct, resulting from his unselfishness, made him appear really beautiful. But if, instead of this, he had disobeyed his mother, and had spent that afternoon in flying his kite, how ugly his selfishness would have made him appear! And so the first reason why we ought to mind this Bible warning against selfishness is because selfishness is an *ugly thing*.

**II. The Second Reason why we ought to Mind it is because Selfishness is a 'Disagreeable Thing'.**—

When the things about us mind the laws which God has made to govern them, then they are all agreeable. The light of the sun is pleasant to see; the gentle sighing of the wind is pleasant to hear; and the

fragrance of the rose, and other flowers, is pleasant for us to smell, just because the sun shines, and the wind blows, and the flowers give out their fragrance according to the laws which God has made for them. Doing this makes them all agreeable.

But if the sun should blaze forth with light ten times stronger than God has arranged for it to give, this would make our days very disagreeable. And so it would be with the wind, and the flowers, and the other things about us; they would all become disagreeable to us, because they were not minding the laws which God made to govern them. And it is just so with ourselves. God's law for us to mind, is that we are not to seek our own things, but the things of others. In the words of our present text it is that 'we ought not to please ourselves'. If we mind this law it will make us unselfish, and then we shall always be agreeable to those about us. But if we do not mind this law, then we shall become selfish, and this will make us disagreeable to all who are about us. We shall find out how true it is that selfishness is a disagreeable thing.

Let us look at some illustrations of this part of our subject. Our first story may be called, 'The effect of a little girl's selfishness'.

A Christian lady, who taught in Sunday school, was talking to her class on the evils of selfishness, when she illustrated it by this story from her own experience. 'I remember,' she said, 'when I was a little girl, I had not learned the Bible warning against selfishness. My Grandma, whom I loved very much, was dangerously ill, and near the end of her life. One day when I was playing with my doll in the corner of the room, she asked me to bring her a glass of water. I did not mind her at first, but went on playing with my doll. Then she called me again. After this second call, I went and got the water, and carried it to her. But I did it in a very unkind and disagreeable way. When she had drunk the water, she said, 'Thank you, my dear child, for bringing me the water; but it would have given me so much more pleasure if you had only brought it willingly'. Now it was nothing but my selfishness which led me to act in that way. My dear Grandma died soon after that. She never asked me to do anything for her again. I have never forgotten how disagreeable my selfishness made me appear to my dear dying Grandma. It is forty years ago *to-day* since this took place, and yet there is a sore spot in my heart which it left there, and which I must carry with me as long as I live.'

Our next story may be called, 'A great man's unselfishness'.

One of the greatest landscape painters that England ever had was the late Joseph W. Turner. The incident now to be told of him shows that he was not only great, but good. He was a member of the committee whose business it was to arrange about hanging up the pictures that were sent in for exhibition to the Royal Academy of London. On one occasion, when the committee were just finishing their work,

and the walls of the Academy were already crowded, Mr. Turner's attention was called to a picture which had been painted by an unknown artist, from some distant part of the country, and who had no friend in the Academy to watch over his interest.

'That is an excellent picture,' said Mr. Turner, as soon as his eye rested on it. 'It must be hung up somewhere for exhibition.'

'That is impossible,' said the other members of the committee, with one voice. 'There is no room left. The arrangement already made cannot be disturbed. No space can be found for another picture.'

'That picture must have a place somewhere,' said the generous artist. Then he deliberately took down one of his own pictures and put the painting of this unknown artist in its place.

How noble that was! Turner had learned thoroughly the warning against selfishness. And in what an interesting and pleasing light his perfect unselfishness presents him to our view!

**III. And the Third Reason why we ought to Mind this Warning is because Selfishness is a 'Sinful Thing'.**—When we commit sin in most other ways we only break one of God's commandments at a time. For example, when we disobey our parents, what commandment do we break? The fifth commandment. If we commit murder, which commandment do we break? The sixth. If we steal, what commandment do we break? The eighth. If we bear false witness against our neighbour, what commandment do we break? The ninth. In committing these sins, we only break one commandment at a time. But when we give way to selfishness, *we break six of God's commandments all at once.*

A good many years ago there lived in Egypt an old man named Amin.

A time of great famine came upon the land, just as it once did in the days of Joseph. Amin had a great store of wheat in his granaries. When bread began to get scarce his neighbours came to him to buy grain. But he refused to sell it to them. He said he was going to keep his stock till all the rest of the grain in the land was gone, because then he would be able to get a higher price for it. Food became very scarce. People were suffering on every hand. Many died of starvation, and yet this selfish man still kept his stores locked up. At last the hungry people were willing to give him any price he might choose to ask for his grain. Then he smiled a cruel, selfish smile, when he thought how rich his locked up stores of wheat would make him.

He took the iron key of his great granary. He opened the door and went in. But in a moment all his hopes of great gain faded away like a dream. Worms had entered the heaps of his once beautiful grain and destroyed it all. Hungry as the people were they yet raised a great shout of gladness for what happened to that wretched man. They saw that it was God's judgment which had come down upon the miserable man for his selfishness, and that it served him right. But such was the effect of his

disappointment upon the old man himself, that he fell down dead at the door of the granary. *His selfishness killed him.* It destroyed his body in this world, and his soul in the world to come.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 356.

#### THE SAVIOUR'S SELF-DENIAL

'Even Christ pleased not Himself.'—ROMANS XV. 3.

ST. PAUL does not mean to be understood by what he tells us in the text, that our adorable Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, came into this world reluctantly, and because He was obliged to do it. It was of His own free will that He laboured for us, and suffered, and died.

He left His radiant throne on high,  
Left the bright realms of bliss,  
And came to earth to bleed and die!  
Was ever love like this?

The Apostle merely wishes to make it plain to us, that while the Lord Jesus lived in this world His great desire and purpose was to accomplish His Heavenly Father's will. In order to do this, He was contented to undergo every trial and persecution, and suffering, and even the cruel and degrading death of the cross. He sought neither wealth nor honour, nor the favour of the great nor His own convenience and comfort. 'Even Christ pleased not Himself.'

He became poor, miserably poor, that His people might be rich. He was willing to be cast down and despised, that they might be exalted. He became wretched, that they might be happy.

When the people were actually carried away by their kinder feelings, and wished to take Him by force and make a king of Him whether He was willing or not, He withdrew Himself into retirement that He might escape their troublesome importunities.

He was much better pleased to have gentle Mary sit quietly and patiently listening to His teachings than when bustling, generous-hearted Martha took uncommon pains with her household cares, that the Master might be well served.

He paid the tax towards the support of the Temple worship, although, as the Son of the King of kings, He need not have done it. And so, in all things, in His life and death, He taught us the great lesson of *self-denial*. He did this to set us an example; and, as far as we are able, it is our duty to try and imitate Him.

Even children are expected to do this. Hence, you observe in the Epistle for Ash Wednesday, that they are expressly mentioned: 'Sanctify a Fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children.'

Several men and boys were one day working in a coal-pit in England, when the iron handle of the cart in which they were, suddenly broke, and a man and a boy who were hanging on the rope above, sprang up by a great effort and seized hold of a chain which always hangs at the side of the shaft as a guide.

It was soon known by those at the mouth of the pit that an accident had happened below, and a miner was sent down with a rope to render what help he could.

He came first in his descent to a boy named Daniel Harding (it is worth while to remember the names of such noble fellows), and when the man prepared to rescue him from his dangerous plight, the generous and unselfish lad exclaimed, 'Don't mind me! I can hold on a little longer. Farther down you will find Joseph Bawn, and he is nearly ready to faint. Make haste to him!'

How glad you will be to know that both Joseph and Daniel were saved. You *need* not, and you *ought* not to wait for *great* occasions when you may practise self-denial. We can manifest the spirit of unselfishness just as well in small matters as in great ones. Give the best apple or peach to your little friend; and the warmest place by the fire; and always offer the most comfortable seat to the sick or to persons older than yourself; and so will you be learning the great lesson of self-denial.

The Germans have a pretty story about a little girl named Jeannette, who once went out to see a grand review of troops. She found an excellent place from which she could enjoy the fine spectacle, when she observed an old woman behind her, trying very hard to get where she could see the soldiers. Jeannette pitied her, and said to herself: 'I should like to see the troops march, but it is not kind in me to stay in this nice seat and let the old woman stand there where she can't see anything. I ought to honour old age, and I will.'

So Jeannette called the old woman, and placing her in her own comfortable seat, quietly retired among the crowd. There she had to stand on tiptoe, and peep, and dodge about, to catch even a glimpse of the splendid scene which she might have seen so easily if she had kept her place. Some of the people laughed at her and called her a silly girl. It was hard to bear this, but still Jeannette was not sorry that she had done her duty.

A few minutes later a man in gay uniform elbowed his way through the crowd and said to her, 'Little girl, will you come to her ladyship?'

Jeannette could not imagine who her ladyship was or what she could possibly want with her, but she followed the man to a sort of balcony not far off. A lady with a pleasant smile said to her: 'My dear child, I saw you give up your seat to the old woman. You acted nobly. Now, sit down by me. You can see everything here.' And thus for a second time was Jeannette rewarded for honouring old age by practising self-denial herself.

We ought not to expect to be paid for doing our duty, but it will often happen that we shall be. Even when no rich person sees and rewards us here, there is One whose approval we shall be sure to win—the approval of the Saviour who 'pleased not Himself.'

There was once a most devoted clergyman in Eng-

land, named Fletcher, who, for a long while had attracted the attention of good people by his faithful discharge of his duties. At length a friend went to him and said: 'I can get the parish of Durham in Cheshire for you, if you will take it. The work is light and the income good'. It was two thousand dollars a year.

Mr. Fletcher mused a little while, and meekly answered: 'I thank you very heartily for your kind intentions for me; but really that parish will not suit me. There is too much money and too little work.'

'A very singular objection!' said the other, 'and one which few men would make. It is a great pity to decline such an excellent parish. But how would you like Madeley?'

Mr. Fletcher's face brightened: 'That would be the very place for me'. And he took it with only half the salary offered him at the other parish; and there, in the practice of the self-denial which he had learned from his Heavenly Master, he passed his useful life.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 61.

### PLEASING OTHERS I

'Christ pleased not Himself.'—ROMANS XV. 3.

SHALL we all say it? Do you know it? Does every one know it? Say it with me, please. 'Christ pleased not Himself.'

I want to talk now about being selfish or unselfish. Which are you? Are you a selfish girl? Are you a selfish boy? I want to try and help you to be unselfish. Oh! there are a great many who are selfish. With some people it is 'I, I, I, I; me, me, me, me'. Shall I tell you that that is very unlike Jesus. Don't be very fond of saying 'I, I, I, I' and 'me, me, me, me'. I am sure Jesus is not. Think what it was for Jesus to be so unselfish, to leave that beautiful home, and the holy angels, and to come down to this poor earth. Was that selfish? Was it selfish to come and be laid in a manger, where the oxen were feeding? in a poor shed by the side of the house. They would not let Him come inside the house, because 'there was no room for Him'. Was it selfish to be brought up as a boy in a carpenter's shop, perhaps to work at the carpentering; to go of His own accord, without being told to go, and learn of the doctors in the Temple, rather than go home with His mother. Was that selfish? And when He grew up to be a man, and was thirty years old, He went about working. I do not know of anybody in the world working so hard; getting up so early in the morning; going about so late; going home so late; sometimes stopping up all night. He did not have time to get His dinner; He did not have time to get His meals. And what was so beautiful, He did not take the praise to Himself. He said, 'My Father doeth all things'. He gave all the honour to His Father. That was not selfish. He did the beautiful work, and then gave all the honour to His Father. And He was so poor! Do you know how poor He was? How much money do you think He had? Never a bit. Never a bit. He



had no money. He had no bed to lie upon. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests,' but He had not a bed to lay His head upon. I suppose His clothes were given Him by the friends who made those clothes for Him. Oh! He was so poor! I do not wonder at a little boy who was reading about all this saying, 'Oh! mother, oh! mother, if I had been alive when Jesus was here, wouldn't I have taken Him my pillow'. Would you have taken Jesus your pillow? He had no bed to lie upon. And look how He lived. He walked through the streets with those fishermen. How people laughed at Him walking with those fishermen! He did not mind being laughed at. They called Him all sorts of names. And then, you know, they spat upon Him, and did everything to try and irritate Him, and make Him angry, but He never was angry. Then they scourged Him. He could in a moment have called the angels from heaven and killed them all, but He did not. He was not selfish. He bore it all. And when He was before Pilate, Peter said, 'I do not know Him!' and was ashamed of Him. And John ran away, even John who lay on His bosom. John ran away from Him. They all ran away from Him. And Judas went and betrayed Him, who was so good and so kind a Friend. And then those cruel nails went through Him. And it became all dark. And then He says, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Oh! I am sure that could not have been to 'please Himself'. It could not have been to 'please himself'. And why? He had no self in Him, no selfishness in Him. He lived for us; He died for us; He raised Himself to heaven for us. There is no self in Christ. You will see one great thing in Christ—He is *unselfish in everything*.

I want now to try to help you to copy Christ. What is the way? What is the first way? Copy Christ! Do you know how you can copy Him? Do you? Some boys and girls look on the line just above the one they are writing, and do not look at the top line. That is a very bad way to copy a copy. Take care when you are copying Christ that you do not copy the copy. Do not copy that boy or girl, and say, 'They are so good I will copy them'. That is the copy of the copy. What is the top line? 'Jesus.' Copy Jesus, and then you will be right. I know you cannot really be like Him, but you can try. You can try.

I remember two brothers made an agreement, and the agreement they made was this—that when they wrote about what Jesus said they would always put a large 'I', and when they wrote what they said or thought, they would put a little 'i'. The little 'i' was for themselves, and the great 'I' for Jesus. Let us all remember that we will all put a little 'i' for ourselves, and a great 'I' for Jesus.

Now, mind that you follow me, What shall we do to be unselfish? I will ask again, Do you think you are unselfish? Let us look at it. When you are called in the morning, and it is time to get up, do you get up in a moment, or do you 'please yourself',

and say, 'The bed is so comfortable, I will stop a little longer'? You know it is your duty to get up now the time is come. Begin the day with a good start. The first thing is to conquer yourself, and then, when you have got a victory over self, you have not pleased yourself.

In the time of Charles the First there was a great general officer. He was a man of great power, and the king asked him to come and help him, and fight for him. The general said, 'I should like very much to come and help, but there is one thing stands in the way—I cannot get up early in the morning'. There was this general officer kept from his duties because he was so fond of his bed. He was a poor soldier. A soldier must 'endure hardship'. And if you are soldiers of Christ, you must endure hardship. Don't please yourself in regard to your bed.

Now you are going to dress. How shall you be like Christ? How shall you *not* please yourself in your dressing? How? Are you to please anybody? Yes. Are you to please yourself? Well, not quite. Well, who are you to please? Somebody, somebody. Please your father, please your mother, please your brother, please your sister. If you are a wife, please your husband; if you are a husband, please your wife. Please somebody, but don't please yourself. I think a great many girls, and some boys, only just think of pleasing themselves. That is just the opposite of Christ. You should be pleasing in your dress in order to please somebody. You must please God.

And now you are coming down. No, you are not coming down yet. You have not said your prayers. Now don't say your prayers to please self. If your prayers are all 'I, I, I, I', that is about self. Did Christ teach us to say, 'My Father which art in heaven?' No! What did He tell us to say? 'Our Father, our Father,' not 'my Father'. He is the Father of everybody else. Jesus went and prayed for other people, and not for Himself. Do not be selfish, then, but in your prayers think of other people. And when you pray, be careful; do it nicely, don't do it anyhow. Do it nicely, reverently, and religiously. Do it in the way to please God, and then it will be pleasing to God.

But now you are coming down. Don't push down before the rest. If each has to get down to breakfast, let the others go first. I knew a dear little girl who let her sister go forward on the stairs, and as she went by she said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. Remember that, and always let the others go first.

But now you have come down. Is it right to be shy? Supposing there is some company, some people in the room, is it right to be shy? No. What makes people shy? Thinking too much about themselves. 'But what will that lady think of me?' Don't think about that, do what is right. You are thinking about yourself too much. Shyness has a great deal to do with pride. If you were humble you would not have so much to do with pride. Don't be shy; be humble and modest.

Now you are sitting yourself to your meals. Don't

be selfish. If there is a dish, and not very much in that dish, don't you say, 'I will have one of those nice bits'. No, let other people have them. And if there is one big piece and another little piece, don't you go and take the big piece. That is selfish eating and drinking. You know what I mean, don't you?

Well then, all day, try to make every one in the house happy. If you begin life by trying to make yourself happy, you won't make yourself happy; but if you begin life by making everybody else happy, you will live a very happy life.

I heard of a beautiful epitaph that was placed on the tombstone over the grave of a young woman. It was this, 'She always made home happy!' Now that was very beautiful. I wonder if that will be said of you when you die. 'She always made home happy.' I don't know anything that could be said more to the praise of any woman, or any man. 'They made home happy.' Do you? Do you make your home happy? Never cross, never letting people think, 'Oh! I wish she was gone'. Do you always make home happy? Is the school any happier because you are there? And home happier because you are there?

And then always, every day, have something to do that will show you are not selfish; something to do for somebody. Supposing you say, 'There shan't be a day I do not do something to make somebody happier'. Supposing you have lived ten years, and have made a person happy every day, why you will have made 3650 persons happy! A big town, a county almost. If you had made a person happy every day for ten years, you would have made happy 3650 persons. That is something to live for, isn't it? And when you are ten years older, you may say, 'I have made 3650 people happy'. I hope you will be able to say that!

I read in a book—I don't know whether it is true, I rather doubt it—I read of a little boy. One day he was seen in the garden doing something to the ground, and who should come by but the Duke of Wellington. As he passed by he saw this little boy busy about something, and he said, 'Why, boy, what are you doing?' 'Oh!' said the boy, 'here is a sick toad. I am trying to make this toad well and happy.' And the Duke of Wellington said, 'But ought not you to be at school?' 'Yes,' said the boy, 'but I am trying to make the toad well.' 'You go to school,' said the Duke, 'I will take care of the toad.' And the little boy went to school, and the Duke of Wellington attended to the poor toad, and in the course of the day the boy received a letter, in the Duke of Wellington's own handwriting, to say the toad was well. I do not know whether the story was true, but it teaches us a lesson. It was very good of the boy, and very grand of the Duke. He was not selfish; he was trying to make others happy.

Well, I will say a little more about how we are to

be unselfish. The first thing is to put self low, and Christ high.

Frank and Ada were brother and sister, and one day their papa came home and brought them each a book, very beautifully bound. They were both the same size, but one of the books had a great many pictures in it, and the other book had no pictures. Of course each would like the book with the pictures. Frank said, 'Give it to Ada, because she is a girl'; but Ada said, 'Give it to Frank, because he is the eldest'. Each wished the other to have it. What should they do? Who was the father to give the book to? He gave it to Frank, because Frank was the eldest.

I can tell you of another little girl, her name was Ellen. One night—she was a little girl—she sat on her mamma's lap, and she said, 'Oh! mamma, I feel very different to what I generally do to-night'. And her mamma said, 'Why do you feel different?' 'Oh!' said the little girl, 'you send me to do things for grandmamma, and I did not like doing things for her. I knew it was wrong. I have done them in a sulky way, but to-day I knew how wicked it was, and before I rang grandmamma's bell, I went round under the lilac tree, and I prayed to God to make me a better girl, and to do all that grandmamma wanted. I saw at once grandmamma wanted something, and I ran and fetched it, and I feel so beautiful now. I am so happy to-night, mamma.' She did not please herself, so she felt so beautiful; and she was beautiful in God's eyes. She made her grandmamma happy, and then she went home happy.

I want each of you to feel like a little gentle stream. Have you in the country ever looked at a little stream? It seems to make everything happy about it. The flowers spring up, and the grass is so green just round this little stream. And why shouldn't you be a little stream, making the flowers come everywhere? Try to be like the little gentle stream.

Everybody is made up of four parts. This I read in a book. Rather funny to have four parts! Shall I tell you what they are? A warehouse, a workshop, a clock-tower, and a counting-house. Do you understand me? That is what you have got—a warehouse, a workshop, a clock-tower, and a counting-house.

What is your warehouse? Your memory. You lay up all sorts of knowledge in your memory. That is your warehouse.

What is your workshop? Your hands.

What is the clock-tower? Your face. The tongue is the bell, and that has to go very sweetly, and very beautifully, like the new bells at Hove. You are to make everybody happy.

What is the counting-house where the accounts are settled? Conscience is the counting-house, and there all the accounts are settled.

And you should use them all for other people. Remember them all—the warehouse, the workshop, the clock-tower, and the counting-house. Do all this, and you will not be selfish.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

## THE HIGHEST SUMMIT

‘For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’—1 CORINTHIANS II. 2.

I. THE highest point of a chain of mountains is generally visible from every quarter of the horizon ; so it is with the cross of Jesus Christ, which is mentioned in almost every page in the Bible, from the Garden of Eden, when it was almost lost in the distant future. When God spoke unto the serpent, and said that the child of the woman would crush its head, and that he, the serpent, would bruise his heel, He meant that the day would come when the power of evil would cause the death of Jesus Christ, Who would, nevertheless, crush and destroy it. Do you not already discern the tragedy of Golgotha through this first prophecy ? And several centuries later, we again perceive the cross, but more distinctly this time, when in the wilderness of Arabia, which the Jews crossed before reaching the Land of Canaan, Moses caused a brazen serpent to be fastened on the top of a pole, enjoining the people to turn their eyes to it with faith, that they might be cured of the bite of the fiery serpents who had caused the death of thousands. Was not that brazen serpent an allegory of our Lord Jesus Christ nailed upon the cross, and to Whom we must turn for the remission of our sins ? Later still, we find the same allegory in the sacrifices offered by the Jews, and specially in the paschal lamb, that spotless lamb of which not a bone was broken, and which was slain on the fourteenth of the month of Nisan. Has not the Lamb of God given His life on the day of the Passover, on that same fourteenth of the month of Nisan, and had not the Scripture said that not a bone of Him should be broken ? The centuries glide on, and still the cross appears on the horizon.

II. From that culminating point which commands the whole Scripture, from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, from an earthly paradise to the celestial one, we discover two seas, two immensities, the one of evil, the other overflowing with Divine mercies.

You have often seen that small instrument called a thermometer which indicates the degree of cold or heat of the atmosphere. It consists of a narrow glass tube filled with a liquid either red or silvery, fastened to a small board, upon which are written the different degrees. When the weather is hot, the liquid rises, but with the slightest accession of cold it sinks again. I shall tell you of another sort of thermometer, which has nothing to do with the weather, but which marks

the warmth of hearts : by warmth of hearts I mean kindness and lovingness. If I wish to know whether a little boy really loves his father, do not suppose I shall ask him to read the letters which he writes to him, if he happens to be away from home. Words or letters were never a true thermometer of hearts ; and however fervent they may be, still the heart that wrote or spoke them may have been cold. No, indeed ! I shall rather wait and see whether the boy really does what he can to please his father, either by his application to his studies, or by endeavouring to cure himself of some bad habit or of some fault ; and if I find him ready to give up to his father even the thing he cares the most for, I shall say, ‘ Here is a child who really loves his parent ’.

What I say about the feelings of a child towards his father, I might say about every other sort of love, let it be fraternal, friendly, patriotic, or divine. I might say it also about God’s love towards us. The greater the sacrifice, the deeper the love ; and He has so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. It is only when you have felt the love of parents for their children that you will fully understand the greatness of this sacrifice. That love of God is all the more admirable that we are so unworthy of it, and that He often meets with nothing but ungraciousness in return.

The lesson of what I have said might be easily learned by all, still three short stories will make it clearer.

1. ‘ One day,’ writes a missionary, ‘ I had been reading to a Greenland chief called Kajarnak the account of the sufferings and of the death of Jesus Christ.

“ What had He done ? ” inquired Kajarnak. “ Had He murdered any one ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ Had He then stolen anything ? ”

“ No ; He had done no harm, and the governor of the country had declared Him innocent.”

“ But why was He put to death ? ”

“ Why ? Listen and you will hear. No, Jesus had done no harm, He had neither killed nor stolen ; but Kajarnak was a great sinner, he had murdered his own child and his brother, so Jesus came upon earth, and suffered and died upon the cross, so that Kajarnak might be forgiven, and in spite of all his crimes obtain access to heaven.”

“ How so ? ” exclaimed the chief. “ Missionary, repeat that over again.”

And the account was read a second time, fresh ex-



planations given, and the Greenland chief, till then hardened and bloodthirsty, became the humble and faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus.

2. Now for my second story. In the beginning of the last century there lived a man of great piety, whose whole life and fortune were devoted to the service of God. His name was Count Zinzendorf. When he was about nineteen years of age he was in Dresden with some friends, visiting the famous gallery, which was at the time one of the great attractions of the town. Of all these celebrated paintings one only attracted the notice of the young man. It was, as he himself relates, a Christ upon the cross, whose face wore a Divine expression, and under which were written the words, 'Hoc feci pro te, quid fecisti pro me?' (See what I have done for thee, what hast thou done for Me?) 'No answer came to my lips,' writes Count Zinzendorf, 'and I could only entreat my Saviour to compel me to suffer with Him, if I was not ready to do so of my own free will.'

If the Saviour were to ask that same question of you, what would be your answer; have you really done anything to prove your love and your gratitude? Perhaps you would answer that you have nothing to give. There you would be wrong, as you will see when you have heard my last story.

3. In a forest of West America, a man having heard a most impressive sermon upon the death of Christ, approached the preacher and asked:—

'Did Jesus die also for me, a poor Indian?'

'Yes, Jesus died for you.'

'Well, then, here are my gun and my blanket. I have nothing else, but I give them to Him.'

'But Jesus has no need of such things,' replied the missionary, 'it is your heart which He asks of you.'

The poor ignorant creature turned away sadly, but he returned the next day and said to the missionary:—

'Here is the poor Indian! Will Jesus have him?'

Do as the poor Indian did. Give your hearts and your love to Jesus, and when you have got to love Him, you will understand what you can do for Him. Remember that He who wins the heart, wins the key which opens every treasure.—A. DECOFFET, *Sermons for Children*, p. 64.

### THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED

I CORINTHIANS II. 9.

ONE day a mother and her son were travelling in an Eastern land. It is different there from what it is in England. In this country we have dew and rain and wells and rivers, and our rivers never run dry. But in the East the sun is sometimes so hot that it dries up the dew and the rain and wells and rivers. And the grass is burned up, and the leaves fall from the trees, and there is no water to drink, and people die of thirst.

It was Hagar and Ishmael her son, who were travelling in that hot land. They had been sent away from Abraham's tent. The water they brought with them in their skin bottle was all spent. The

hot sun beat upon their heads. And poor Ishmael grew sick for want of water, and was near to die. It was a wilderness into which they had come. There were neither roads, nor houses, nor inns in it. And they could find no wells with water in them, no cool rushing streams, no green pastures, no shady trees. There was only the hot earth, with the blistering rocks and the burned up grass beneath their feet, and above their heads the blazing sun.

When people are very sad they are often not sure about their way; tears blind the eyes. Hagar was very sad. She loved Abraham. He was the father of her boy. His tent had been her home for many years. It was the only home the boy ever knew. And now she was homeless. And her boy had no father to care for him. And he was about to die in the wilderness. What was she to do? She could not carry him, he was a big grown-up lad. And she could not bear to be beside him when she was not able to give him help. Poor Hagar! She did the best she could. There was a little clump of brush-wood near, and she laid him down there in the shadow. She herself drew back a little, and burst into tears; she could not bear to lose her boy, or to see him die.

But just then, when things were at the worst, she heard a voice. It was the voice of an angel. 'What aileth thee, Hagar?' the voice said; 'God hath heard the cry of thy child.' And suddenly, it was as if scales fell from the poor mother's eyes, and she saw there, in that very place, the thing she most wished to see, a well with water in it. In a moment her heart was filled with gladness. Her tears dried up. And she made haste and brought of the water to her boy, and he drank and did not die. Now God did not make that well that day; the well was there, although Hagar did not see it at first. The well had been there perhaps from the beginning of the world. It was prepared by God, and prepared for Hagar and her boy. Just there, where it was wanted by these two, God had prepared it, preserved it from being filled up, kept water in it, all ready, for years and years, till the day when Ishmael should need to drink of it and live.

Two young students were sitting one winter evening beside a fire. They had had a long talk together, and mostly about God. One of the two had lost sight of God and could not find Him again. He had been telling his friend this very fact, and saying that he could find no sign of Him in the world, or in his own heart.

It was no joy to this young soul that he had lost sight of God. He was not one of the evil class who sit in the chair of the scorner. He was filled with the same kind of sorrow that one has who has lost a friend. He had willingly listened to all that his companion had to say to him. And then the talk between the two ceased, and they were sitting silent, looking into the fire.

'Oh, my friend,' said the one who had lost sight of God, 'sitting as we are doing now, I sometimes see

faces of people I have known, in the fire. From my heart I wish I could see the face of God there.'

The friend said: 'And does not something like God's face really shine out from this fire? Would there have been any fire for us two this night if some loving One had not been thinking of us before we were born? Who made the coals which are burning there? Who stored them up in the earth for the children of men? Who gave the eyes to find it, and the hands to dig it out?'

His companion did not answer, and he went on. 'I do not wonder that people used to believe that fire was stolen from heaven. It is just like a thing that came from heaven. It turns winter into summer and night into day; it cheers us, warms us, brightens our home for us. It renders us a thousand services which it must have been intended to render, and which seem to compel one to think that it was prepared by God for our use.'

I cannot tell what effect these words had on the young man who had lost sight of God. But the well which Hagar found prepared for her, and what this young student said to his sorrowful friend, have set me a-thinking of the things which God has prepared.

We are living in a world which is full of things prepared. A fire far bigger than the one those young men sat beside has been prepared and kept burning by God for a longer time than you or I could tell. The sun is a fire around which all living things are gathered. It is life, and heat, and health, and light, and joy, and movement to man and beast, to birds and trees. It sends its heat and power into all things, and makes all things fruitful, and active, and glad.

And not the sun only, but moon, and stars, and hills, and streams, and fruitful fields. An old English poet has said this in words which every child should have by heart:—

For us the winds do blow;  
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.  
Nothing we see but means our good,  
As our delight, or as our treasure.  
The whole is, either our cupboard of food  
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The stars have us to bed;  
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws;  
Music and light attend our head,  
All things unto our flesh are kind.

And all things have been prepared for us by God. He has brought us into a heritage that is very fair, and He has filled it with things good for our use.

When the children of Israel came up out of the wilderness into the Land of Promise they found houses, and gardens, and walled cities, and vineyards, and olive yards, and ploughed fields, and rich pasture lands all prepared for them. It is God's way in dealing with His children. He prepares good things for them first, and then brings them in to love Him and serve Him in the enjoyment of these. 'See,' He said to the children of Israel afterwards, speaking by the

mouth of Joshua: 'I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not do ye eat. Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth.'

And it is just this way God has dealt with you to whom I am this day speaking. You came from God as babies into this Christian land. When you opened your eyes and began to look about you you found yourselves in homes prepared for you, with loving mothers and fathers waiting to take care of you. You found yourselves in a land of churches, and days of worship, and Bibles, and schools, and teachers. Around the fire on winter evenings you have listened to stories of patriots who fought and of martyrs who died, for their country and for truth; these very stories are part of what God has prepared for you in this happy land. Beside you, perhaps in the same street or village in which you live, are men and women who have given themselves to God, and who every day of their lives, quietly and unseen, are going about doing good; these also, to be a help and example to you, have been prepared for you by God. But more wonderful and better than all, in this very land you can find God Himself. There is no spot in it from which the cry of a child's heart will not reach Him. And here, as in Judæa long ago, His Son is taking up children in His arms to bless them, and is healing the sick and opening the eyes of the blind, and saying to the poor and the heavy laden: 'Come unto Me and I will give you rest'. And all this is part of the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

There is a hymn we sometimes sing, which begins with the words, 'I'm but a stranger here'. In that hymn it is said, 'Earth is a desert drear'. But the meaning is not that the beautiful earth itself which God has prepared for our dwelling-place is a desert. The meaning is that it looks like a desert to eyes that have lost sight of God. It is like a desert also to people like Hagar, who are in sorrow, whose eyes are blind with tears because those they love have died or are about to die.

But for people in these circumstances, and for all to whom for any cause the beautiful earth looks like a desert, God has prepared a well more wonderful than that which Hagar saw. Jesus was speaking of this well when He said to the woman of Samaria, 'whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give shall never thirst'. Jesus Himself—as the Word of God—is this well. He is the well in which the water of life springs up, the well which the saints in heaven drink of, of which God Himself drinks. And it has been prepared for us by God, prepared in Jesus, into whom for us the living water has been poured. And Jesus, thinking of Himself as this well of heaven, calls upon all to come unto Him and drink.

I read once of a young German student who found out this well. He was like one in a wilderness where he could not find God. Like Ishmael, he was dying for thirst, but it was the sight of God for which he

was thirsting. Day and night his cry was, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' He saw himself to be a poor sin-laden creature, who was shut out by his sins from the presence of God. Day and night he sought after God. He sought in the church and could not find Him there. He shut himself up in his room, and cried out in the darkness, and could not find Him there. He saw the faces of saints and holy prophets in the fire, but never the face of God. His soul was faint within him for want of God. But one day he went into the library of the college where he was studying, and there, on the shelves, all covered with dust, he found the very well for whose water his soul was thirsting; he found the Bible. There it was, all ready for him, waiting for him, prepared by God hundreds of years before, put there, in that very spot, for him by God. And the young man opened it and read and found the story of Christ in it, and the way by which a soul must go to find God, and how in Jesus a well has been opened for all sin, and that whosoever drank of that well should be cleansed of sin, made holy and live for ever. It was Martin Luther who found the Bible in this wonderful way, and also found, as we also shall do if we try, that it is a well in the desert, a well into which God has poured water of truth and life for the soul to drink of and to live.

One of the wonderful things which Luther read in the Bible was the story of an old prisoner in Rome. The old man was chained to a soldier, and thinking sad thoughts. It was the great Paul. For telling men that Jesus was a well of salvation he had been sent by wicked men to prison. And now his trial was coming on, and his judge was a very evil man, and Paul was thinking in his own heart that the judgment might go against him. It was something like this which was passing through his mind: 'My enemies are cruel, my judge is bad, and I may be condemned to die'. Then he thought of the work which remained to be done. Then he wondered who should do his work if he were put to death. Then he looked into the lonesome grave and across into the world beyond, and there he saw, all prepared for him, the very sight his sad soul wished to see; he saw Jesus on the throne of God. It was like seeing a well in a desert; it was like drinking of living water when the soul is faint with thirst. 'Jesus reigns,' he said to himself. 'The work will go on, though I should die; and if I die, I shall go to Him.'

When you and I come to the end of our lives may we see the vision which Paul saw, and be able to say with him, 'To live is Christ, to die is gain'. And may we know that we are going home to our Father's house, and to places there prepared for us by Christ.

We shall never know the beauty of these places till then. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 153.

## THE GARDEN OF GOD

'Ye are God's husbandry.'—1 CORINTHIANS III. 9.

**I. Preparing the Soil.**—Nobody needs to be much of a gardener in order to know that it is useless to cast seed upon the soil unless the soil be first prepared for it. If you cast seed on the hard surface of a footpath leading through your garden, you need not expect it to grow. The soil of the garden must be turned up with the spade; the plough must be made to go through the field. The earth must be made loose and soft, and the stones taken out of it; and if there be any roots or weeds in it, they must be torn up and thrown away.

Besides, the right time must be selected for doing this. If you had begun to dig your plot two or three months ago, when the atmosphere was bitterly cold, and the frost had gone deep into the ground, you might have succeeded by main force in breaking up the earth and making it loose and soft; but, though you had sowed the best seeds in it, I do not think many of them would have grown. But at this time of the year a kind of force begins to move in the soil which was dormant during the winter; and the favourable moment must be taken advantage of to cast the seed in.

**II. The Sowing of the Seed.**—What is the seed which is sown in the soul? It is the Word of God. The texts of the Scriptures are like the little seedlets you have wondered at as you were going to bury them in the earth.

There does not seem to be the least resemblance between a text of the Bible and the beauty of a man's soul. Yet the one may grow into the other. The words of the Bible are the thoughts of God; and all thoughts are like seeds; they may grow into forms as different from themselves as the flower is different from the seed. Look at this church rising above us. It is something beautiful and substantial, is it not? But it is not long since it was only a thought in a man's mind. The architect saw it in his mind before there was one stone dug from the quarry to build it. But his thought was sown and took root, and this is the flower it has grown to.

It is very wonderful what a thought or a word may grow to. All the grand and beautiful works of man are the flowers which have grown from his thoughts; for they existed as thoughts in his mind before they grew to be realities which all the world can see.

Now, if man's thoughts are seeds which can grow to such wonderful shapes, it is not surprising that God's thoughts should be the seeds of very beautiful flowers.

**III. The Growth of the Seed.**—When the seed is put into its place in the earth it is covered over, and it seems as if it were dead and buried. But a mysterious process is going on. The little seedlet opens its mouth, and draws in the sap and the substance of the soil round about it; and the richer the soil is in which it is planted, the more food does it get, and the faster does it grow. It begins to expand and make room for itself. Then it sends a tiny shoot



upwards, which struggles through the earth in which it is buried. But it pauses; it is waiting for something. By and by a little raindrop finds its way down through the earth to it, and is followed by another and another. It drinks them eagerly in, and begins to push upwards again, like a vigorous worker who has been refreshed by a deep draught of water. But soon it pauses again; it is waiting for something else. By and by a sunbeam cleaves its way down to it, and is followed by another and another. This was what it was waiting for, and it thrills with joy as it feels the heat going through and through it. Upwards still it pushes its way, till at last—look!—it comes forth into the open air and the full sunshine; the rain washes it clean, the breeze kisses it, and the dew moistens its lips every night. And so it rises slowly from stage to stage, till it is a perfect flower.

Now, the seed in the soul grows in the same way. It may long remain unseen, and yet it may be alive and slowly coming to the surface. It grows little by little and stage by stage. God does not expect you to be in your characters exactly like men and women. He does not wish you to be as wise or as bold or as active as you may be expected to be some years hence. There are graces of childhood, and graces of youth, and graces of manhood and womanhood, and graces of old age; and God likes best to see each time of life yielding its own fruit.

But at all stages the growth of the seed depends on getting the sunshine and the rain and the sap of the soil. What are these? Well, I should say the sap which enriches the soil of the soul is Christ. Just as the flower would starve and die if it were not being filled with the substance of the earth, so all the lovely flowers of the soul will die unless the soul be filled with Christ. Will you seek, therefore, that Christ may be in you, that He may come and fill your soul? You never can be truly good or beautiful within unless you be united to Him.

**IV. The Flowers of God.**—Some of you, I dare say, have very many different kinds of flowers in your garden in the course of the year. You have crocuses and pansies, and mignonette and roses, and I do not know what all. It would be a strange garden in which there were only flowers of one kind. And what a treat it is to get into a great and fine garden, and see flowers of a hundred kinds and a hundred colours blazing on every side!

We like variety in a garden, and God likes it too. Have you ever thought that God loves beauty and that He loves variety of beauty? Why else has He created all the different kinds of flowers, with their endless variety of colour? He might have made the earth all of one colour. He might have made the grass colourless instead of a bright green, and the sky black instead of blue, and the stars white instead of sparkling gold. The prairies and the mountain solitudes are God's gardens, where He walks alone in the midst of beauty.

But there are gardens He loves still better. They

are the souls of children and of men and women in which the flowers of His grace are growing. What are these flowers? Here is one list of them: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance'. And here is another: 'Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity'. These are lovely flowers. What an exquisite flower is virtue, or Christian manliness, with the crimson flush of the rose on it! And how beautiful a flower is humility, drooping its head like a lily; and brotherly kindness, with the homely grace of the daisy; and love, with the clinging clusters and the fragrance of the honey-suckle!

Would you not like your soul to be a garden with these lovely flowers growing in it—a garden of God, in which He would delight? Yes; He comes down and walks in His garden, and inspects every plant in it.

**V. God's Other Garden.**—The flowers in your gardens are either plucked or they very soon die. When winter comes round and the keen frost holds the earth in its iron grasp, not one of them is visible. But God's flowers do not thus decay. What becomes of them? You have sometimes, I dare say, transplanted a flower from one part of your garden to another, because you thought it would grow better in the new spot. And you know that, as winter approaches, the gardener sometimes lifts plants out of the ground, and transfers them to the hothouse, where they will be shielded from the withering winds and saved from the biting frost.

That is something like what God does with His flowers. When the right time comes He transplants them from this world to the better land. There the soil is far richer, and the dews are far more refreshing, and the sunshine is bright and constant. There God's flowers will grow to a size and shine with a beauty they have never had in this poor cold world. God walks about among them and rejoices in them all; and the light of His countenance as He passes by makes them flourish with a more immortal bloom. Oh, may you and I be so filled with the beauty of God here below, that if death come and take us away, our loved ones whom we leave behind may be able to say, 'We will not weep. It is another flower transplanted to God's other garden.'—JAMES STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 38.

#### SLAVES

'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.'—  
1 CORINTHIANS VI. 19, 20.

I HAVE lived long enough to see some very grand sights. I have seen our armies come home victorious from battle; I have seen our Queen sail down between the lines of her fleet, when the air was dense with the smoke of the cannon that thundered their salute, and even above that rose the hearty cheers

of her sailors as they 'manned the yards'; but I never felt so proud of England as one day when I saw a man, once a negro slave—who had been once given in exchange for a horse, and another time sold for some tobacco—walk up the theatre at Oxford, no longer a slave and heathen, but a clergyman of the English Church, and receive the highest honour the greatest university in the world could confer upon him. Bishop Crowther, as a Doctor of Divinity, took his seat among the most learned and the greatest in the land. I often hear boys and girls saying they want something to read. I think a part of our children's time for reading might well be given to reading such stories as these; learning how, in days of old, good men and true, good women and true, have had to fight hard and to sacrifice much for these glorious blessings which we ourselves, and millions of our fellow-subjects in every clime, this day enjoy. The memory of their lives and of their struggles is like a fresh mountain breeze coming down to purify the close, selfish atmosphere in which so many of us live.

I. What was it that made slavery so terrible a state of life? The slave was completely in the power of his owner—entirely at the disposal of his master. Neither his body nor his soul was his; his children were not under his control, the master might sell them any day to some other master. In other words, a slave was not his own; he was 'bought with a price'. Now, curiously enough, that is just what St. Paul tells us we Christians are. When you think of what 'a slave' meant, is it not surprising that there was no title of which St. Paul seems to have been so proud as the title of 'slave'? Whenever the word 'servant' is used in our translation in the Epistles, the word is really 'slave,' or bond-servant; and the great Apostle boasts again and again that he is a 'bond-servant of Jesus Christ'. He often commences his letters thus. He wrote to the Philippians, 'Paul and Timothy, the bond-servants of Jesus Christ'. He opens his great Epistle to the Romans, 'Paul, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ'. St. Paul tells all Christians that they have the same great privilege for which he was so thankful and of which he was so proud—they are bond-servants, or slaves, of Jesus Christ. Why did St. Paul so rejoice in being a slave of his Master? Because, strange though it may seem, this slavery is the only real liberty on earth. There are some wonderful words in a prayer in our Morning Service which explain this. We say, 'O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord . . . whose service is perfect freedom'. In the old Latin prayer from which these words come the last sentence is more striking, and might be translated, 'to be whose slaves is to be kings'.

II. You were all the slaves of sin, just as the poor negroes were the slaves of their masters. England paid twenty millions of pounds to deliver these slaves. That was an immense sum with which to buy the poor negroes out of bondage. It wasn't a drop in the Atlantic or the millionth part of a drop in the

ocean, if you can imagine that, compared to the price with which we have been bought by Jesus Christ. The price He paid for us was Himself. Does not that thought of the greatness of His love to you stir up some love in your hearts for Him? Whenever you feel inclined to obey sin, to yield to that bad temper, to speak that angry word, to indulge in that forbidden ease, to utter that lie, to disobey your father or mother, to listen to that to which you feel you ought not to listen, or any of the hundred other things that are sinful, just think one moment Whose you are—what a price He paid; and let every feeling of gratitude and of love rise up in your hearts, and say to that sin, 'I am the slave of Jesus Christ—body and soul His; and, with His blessing, I will obey Him and not *you*'.—T. TRICHO-MOUTH SHORE, *Saint George for England*, p. 71.

#### BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirit, which are God's.'—1 CORINTHIANS VI. 20.

LIFE is a very strange thing, and to a great many people simply means 'selfishness' in one form or another. But I want to put before you this evening some facts out of God's own Word which tell us what life really is, why we are here, and while we are here what the religion of Jesus Christ means to each one of us.

I. First of all, then, what is life? Our few days on earth (and how few they are!) which we call our life are but the preparation for the great eternal life which is before us.

If we stand on the sea-shore and take in the palm of our hand one little grain of sand and then compare that one grain with all the sand of shores and deserts of the world, we get but little idea of time as compared with eternity. If we take a drop of water from the sea and then think of the vast oceans that beat upon the countless shores of the world, we fail to grasp the shortness of our life as in comparison with the great future beyond the grave—or as I heard it put by my old rector in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster: 'If you could imagine the greatest sand mountain in the world and then imagine a robin coming once every thousand years and removing a grain of sand in its beak, until the great sand hill was moved to another place'—even then it is impossible to gauge eternity.

These simple illustrations will give us some idea of our life here in comparison with that which is to come. Our life, then, is a *preparation*, and God places us here for a purpose, and so we come to our second question, *Why are we here?*

II. For the answer to this question we turn to 1 Corinthians VI. 20: 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's'. Here is the purpose of our life—to 'glorify the God who has made us, the God who has redeemed us'. Our thoughts go to the great price paid for our redemption. We seem to see Jesus

walking along that Via Dolorosa weighed down by the weight of the cross. We see Him insulted by the crowds which surge around, mocked, spat on, beaten, despised, rejected. We see Him as He draws near the hill Calvary, treading the path of suffering, of degradation, and of agony in all its most terrible meaning; and as we gaze upon His loving face we seem to hear Him say, 'Ye are bought with a price. Ye are not your own.' But the sacrifice is yet incomplete, and there rings out above the babel of the crowd the dull thud of the hammer as the nails are driven home through His hands and His feet, and the great cross, with that suffering body upon it, is raised in its place. Ah! how we seem to realise as we gaze, the truth—the eternal truth—of these words, 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price'.

III. 'Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' Here is the purpose. How far have you and I fulfilled it? Are we living for Him, or are we simply miserable victims and slaves of a life of selfishness? If we are living for self we can't be living for God in the way in which He has called us to live for Him.

There was once a young clergyman working in a mining village. The miners paid little attention to his message, but he laboured on, and week by week tried his best to win these rough miners for Christ. He used to have a short service every Wednesday evening in the church, and to this he generally got a few of the miners' wives and their children. Few of the miners ever came near the service, and as weeks and months passed away he began to despair of ever reaching them. One evening he had begun the service as usual and was just giving out his text: 'Greater love hath no man than this'—so far he had read when a dull roar of voices was heard outside; nearer came the unwonted sounds and the church door was burst open, while an excited crowd of men and women rushed up to the preacher with the terrible message, 'The pit's on fire! Come!' Hastily unrobing, the young clergyman made his way to the pit's mouth. The cage was just going down with an exploring party and he tried to jump in; but a burly miner stopped him, saying, 'Maister, it beant' for you—it beant' for you'. But, unheeding, the preacher forced his way into the cage, and soon was with the others near the scene of the disaster; man after man was recovered from the débris, and soon the cage was almost full. There is only room for one; the young clergyman half-dragged, half-carried a poor miner whom he had just recovered from the workings and placed him on the cage. There is no room for the rescuer; he must wait, he says, until the cage comes down again. Up the cage goes with its living burden, when suddenly there is heard the dull roar of falling earth and rocks, and the people realise with a sickening sense of horror that the pit has fallen in—it was too true. The young clergyman had died in trying to save his

people. Very tenderly did they place his body by the pit's mouth, and as it lay there it preached a more real sermon than he could ever have preached in life. The old miner whose life he had saved came, and with a voice husky with emotion, said: 'He gave his life for me'. The text which had been begun in the pulpit a few hours before was finished now. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'

IV. So we see what our life is—a preparation for the future life. Why we are here—to glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are His. And now we come to our last thought. What does the Lord Jesus Christ do for each one of us who are His? In 1 Peter iii. 18 we read, 'Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,' and so we are able, through the Lord Jesus, to enter into God's presence. We are able to pray to Him as *our Father*; we are able to look up to Him as the one who holds our right hand and says to us, amid many difficulties, trials, and temptations: '*Fear not, I will help thee*'. —NORMAN BENNET, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 48.

#### HEAVENLY CURES FOR YOUTHFUL CARES

'I would have you without carefulness.'—I CORINTHIANS VII. 32.

The old folk think that we young folk have no cares. It is a great mistake. Can we not weep as bitterly as they? Do we not play as passionately as our fathers and mothers ever loved or laboured? Are not our plans as terribly real to us as theirs to them? And do not other wills cross ours as gallingly as theirs were ever crossed? Yet because we are children these are trifles. And because they are grown folks, those are cares. They laugh at us because we worry. Over their own worries they break their hearts.

I fancy that in heaven the laugh, if laugh there be, is on the children's side. Around God's throne, 'above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,' as Milton has it in a poem you must all get by heart some day, the great things and the small things here are not so different as the grown folk think them. I am sure that many a game at marbles is far more real in God's sight than half the tricky business in the offices. To cherubim and seraphim there cannot be much difference 'twixt worrying about a doll and worrying about a thousand sovereigns. When the old folk reach heaven, perhaps they will find *they* have been the children. Then at long last they will have a fellow-feeling with us. And they will see the pride of it all, in having smiled at the young folk's cares, and all the time grown lean over their own.

What are the heavenly cures for youthful cares?

I. The first is **Consider**. 'Consider the lilies of the fields,' says Jesus, 'they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' Now you have botanised perhaps; or you have plucked



the lilies and adorned your tables with them. But did you ever *consider*? That is the question. It wants but little time, few talents, and no money, yet we all cry and carp and quarrel, but consider—never! When did you ever steal away from the crowd and clamour of the school, and sit alone, and listen to the hum of myriad wings of indistinguishable creatures, and watch the flowers, and think how all the time that *you* were fretting, God's children of the fields were growing silently upwards into beauty, till even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these? When did you ever rise ten minutes earlier to hear the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the congregation in the tree-tops? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things that bringeth out their host by number. For that He is strong in power, not one faileth.

II. The second cure is *Cast*.—Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee. Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Consider took you out into the fields. Cast takes you right to God. And so consider is a good word, but cast is a better.

Sometimes when the storm is driving through the Pentland, the stoutest ships are glad to run into the lee of Holborn Head and to cast anchor there. The pilot has considered everything, but considering alone will never save the ship. Considering must end in casting, or there will be wreckage after all. Now an anchor is not a pleasant thing to look at. It does not rise with grace like the mast, nor stream out proudly like the pennon. But there are times when mast and pennon would be but sorry furniture, but for the ugly anchor. And at these times men do not keep the anchor on board. They cast it out on to the anchorage, and so anchored, the ship rides in safety. I sometimes think God meant our cares, no less than our hopes, to be our anchors. Cares are not glad-some things like joys. They are far liker lead than gossamer. But there come seasons of peril and unsettlement and storm when the casting of that anchor on to the anchorage of God will hold and steady us as nothing else can do. Come, sea-captains (for every lad at heart is that), out with your anchors! God's ways are in the sea. Cast all on God, and He will carry you through.

III. These then are two of the Gospel cures. But there is still another—*Come*. 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Considering and casting, these are good. But coming is the best of all. It takes the others in its arms. All other Bible means and methods for the quieting of hearts and ordering of lives are enfolded here.

What is it to come? It is to trust in Jesus. It is to look to Jesus. It is to kiss His feet, and hold His garment's hem, and cling to Him. It is to lie before the cross and hate ourselves, and tell the Lord that we deserve death and hell, and know it, but that we trust Him. It is all this done daily, truly, yet, alas! how ignorantly, till we die. It is to lean on

Jesus, and to lean the hardest in the hardest hours. It is to venture wholly on Him. That is coming. And it is all so strange, so mystical, so desperate, so contrary to every passion and pleasure of the heart I never wondered that the Lord said, 'No man can come to Me, except the Father draw him'. The marvel would be the other way. Come! for you can come. That faintest stirring Christwards in your heart is the first binding of the drawing and everlasting cord. God never drags. God always waits and longs and loves to draw. Trust God. Yield yourselves up to God. 'All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.'—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 25.

### THE INCREASING VISION

'For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'—1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 12.

THE Bible is of no use to those who have no vision to begin with, any more than a telescope is of any use to a blind man. It must be used, also, by those who have some appreciation of its value as a book of guidance and wisdom.

The first telescope was, undoubtedly, produced in Holland, and, though there is much dispute about it, the credit for its invention is given to Galileo. His first telescope was much like a pair of opera glasses, and could magnify to about thirty times. With such a primitive glass, he succeeded in discovering the satellites of Jupiter, the mountains of the moon and other celestial objects. Kepler improved the telescope by the addition of the second, convex lens. The great telescopes with which we are familiar are the product of very recent times, until now the manufacture of the largest and finest telescopic lenses has become one of the highest arts, with Alvan Clark of Cambridge, Mass., the most successful maker.

In the use of the Bible as a spiritual telescope, we are enabled to bring the far-distant facts of our eternal destiny very near. Yet the truths of the world-to-come are not all equally made clear to us. Some things regarding that future life are made very plain, while others are in the shadow of their own remoteness. However, what we know is exact knowledge, and may be fully relied upon. Let us trust the Word and it will support us in every time of uncertainty and danger.

One time there was a man compelled to cross a river. It was in the winter season, and he found the river frozen over. People who lived near the river told him that it would be perfectly safe to cross upon the ice, but he was so doubtful of what they said that he crawled over upon his hands and knees. When near the middle, he was greatly startled by a sound in the distance, and he waited to see its cause. Presently around a bend of the river, came a negro driving a team of mules drawing a load of pig-iron! What a foolish man he was to be so afraid. It is not necessary to state that after he saw that load of

pig-iron he at once arose and walked with perfect confidence. Life has its perils, but the Divine Word gives us the needed assurances, and we should trust our experiences as coming by the direction of an All-wise Providence.

The world of spirits is unseen, but present, now and here. It is the hidden kingdom of God which, in due season, will be revealed. Now in this spring-time, the world of nature shows its hidden powers in the outburst of the life which God hides in it. So in the coming of that eternal spring, for which Christians are waiting. Blessed are they who shall behold what mortal eye hath not seen, when they find themselves gifted with fresh powers, vigorous with the life that is in them.

So then continue to gaze through your telescope of the Word of your God. Look for the new heavens and the new earth. You will see ever new beauties from day to day.—GEORGE V. REICHEL, *Bible Truth through Eye and Ear*, p. 355.

### THE MAGIC CRYSTAL

'Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.'—1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 12.

WHAT a lot of things we want to know! We begin by wanting to know 'how the wheels go round,' and then, as we get older, we want to know how the world goes round, why it does it, and what it is all for. We want to know all about this world, and we also want to know all about the next. How are we to learn about these things? That is just what the Apostle is trying to show us.

He says we can see something about them all now, but it is darkly, as if we were looking in a kind of mirror. You children understand what he means. You read fairy tales, and poetry, and other things that are good, so you know all about Merlin and other great and wise magicians. Do you remember how they came to see things that were far away, and tell what was going to happen, and what things had been done? It was by their wonderful crystal globe.

There was the round glass ball as clear as a fountain, without a speck or a flaw, but as the magician gazed upon it, it grew dim, as if the mists were going up within it; and then, as he gazed and gazed, the mists would clear away, and there, on the crystal mirror, he would see all that he wanted to know, whether it was about things far off or near, things past or things to come. 'Twas very wonderful. That crystal globe must have been long since broken or lost, for nobody has it now. It has vanished like the magicians themselves.

But we have a mirror that is like it, though something different. It is the Bible. As we look into it reverently, lovingly, prayerfully, we see more and more, better and clearer, all we want to know about God and ourselves; about the world, and what it is for; about life and death, and everything we need to learn. Make much of your Bible. It is the grandest possession you ever can have. Oh, the happy, happy

times I have had with it in some quiet corner! What beautiful visions I have seen in it! What great things I have learnt from it! The real magician—the one who is really wise—is the boy or girl, the man or woman, who loves to look much and often into this mirror, for these come to learn there what never can be seen or learnt anywhere else—the love and the wisdom of God working through everything.

But there is another meaning this text may have. When it says we see 'darkly' or dimly in this mirror, it means that it all looks like 'a riddle'. That is the word you find in the margin—'a riddle'. And things do look like that very often. So many strange things happen we can't account for, such wonderful things are done which we can't explain, that when we look up to the stars, and then think of where we were born, and wonder where we shall die; when we see how much sorrow there is in the world, yet how much beauty and goodness too, and how things often go wrong when you meant them to go right, and how they sometimes turn out good though you never intended it, then it all looks like a riddle! Will you give it up? Some do. They grow weary, poor things, of trying to puzzle it all out. But they grow weary because they don't take the right way; that's all. How simple the most difficult riddle becomes when you have found it out! Would you like to find out this riddle?—the riddle about everything? I can tell you how. *It is by loving and trusting Jesus Christ, and trying to live like Him.* For it is said, and the word is true, 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him'. They have the key to the riddle; everything is made simple to the one who lives loving and trusting Jesus.

Would you wish to be wise? 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' Give Jesus your heart: learn from Him; trust Him, and He will teach you the secret of life—open up to you the good meaning of God in every dark riddle or difficulty you shall ever have to meet. So, whenever there is anything too hard for you to understand, go to Jesus, and tell Him all about it in prayer, and then, when prayer has cleansed your eyes and prepared your heart, turn to the crystal mirror of His Word: there you will get the light, the vision, the guidance you need, and so be made wise, and wiser still for His full salvation in the end, when you shall see Him, as He sees you now—'face to face'.—J. REID HOWATT, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 80.

### THE ALCHEMIST'S SECRET

'The greatest of these is charity.'—1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 13.

THREE hundred years ago might have seen some venerable-looking old man—people called him an alchemist—followed him home, would have found room full of bottles and glass vessels, with furnaces and other strange things. What could he use them for? Trying to find something which would turn other things to gold. If he had found it? Very rich—but what use? Very old and must soon die. So used to try and find something else as well which would

make him live when he got rich. He was seeking for something which would give him *riches* and *life*.

Would you like to discover this great secret? You may—it will give you better riches and a better life than any he aimed at. 'Treasure in heaven,' and 'eternal life' to enjoy the treasure. What is the secret? *Love*.

**I. Love Turns Everything Into Treasure.**—What is *treasure*? Not merely riches, but riches which we can *keep*. [King's treasure, not the money he spends, but the jewels and valuables which he does not spend.]

**1. Things we like.**

Suppose you have money—don't mean to keep it—spend it—what you buy only lasts for a little—wears out—goes somehow, more or less quickly.

Suppose instead, see some poor person—very hungry—'I am a little Christian—Jesus would have helped—wants me to help. There, take this.' 'Gone?' No. Gone *up*. Treasure in heaven. Only remember may give from wrong motives—to get praise, or because giving is pleasant, in such case you have bought praise or pleasure with your money. Only *love* can turn it into treasure: 'I do want to love Jesus, and He wants me to do this'. One of these days find the treasure waiting for you. [Picture out—Jesus come again—we all before Him. Matt. xxv. 40.]

**2. Things we don't like.**

**Troubles.**—Our Lord turned His troubles into treasure (Isa. liii. 10, 11; Heb. xii. 2).

So did St. Paul (2 Cor. xii. 8-10, cf. Rom. v. 3-5.)

**Enemies.**—Love turns them into friends. [Alexander the Great was asked, how so young he could do so much. 'I use my enemies so well that I compel them to be friends, and I treat my friends so well that I never lose their friendship.']

**Difficulties.**—Boy at school—can't learn lessons Younger brother comes—elder brother helps him—obliged to learn himself—finds his own work easier. *Love* has made it grow easy.

One of these days when we get to heaven and come to look over our treasury—what a heap of strange things! All *treasures* then—but *love* has made them treasures.

**II. Love Gives Life** (1 John iii. 13, 14).—Death can't get in where there is love.

[Fire on prairies—all grass burnt up—one green spot left. Why? Little spring there; fire could not destroy because spring never failed. So 1 Corinthians xiii. 8. Charity, i.e. love *never faileth*.]

**III. How may We get Love?**—Some say, 'I can't love. Some things I never shall like. So selfish; never can be like Jesus Christ; always going about doing good—always thinking how I can help others.'

Yes, you can.

1. Do little kind acts, then love will grow.

2. Ask God. He will give you this *gift* (Jas. i. 17). The 'most excellent gift'. 'The love of God'—the love like God's love—is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is *given* unto us' (Rom. v. 5).—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 45.



# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

## CHRIST'S LETTERS

'Ye are . . . the Epistle of Christ.'—2 CORINTHIANS III. 3.

I. Is there anything in the world more wonderful than a letter? When the English missionaries first went to Africa, nothing surprised the black people more than the letters they wrote. 'Does the person you write to hear you speak?' said a chief to one of the missionaries. 'No.' 'Does he see your lips move?' 'No.' Then he ranged a long line of his people in a field, asked the missionary to stand at one end, and stood with a second at the other end. 'Now write what I bid you.' The missionary beside him put down the chief's words, and the bit of paper was passed on by a messenger to the other end. At that end the missionary standing there read the words to the messenger. The messenger repeated them to the chief, and the chief cried out, 'It is just magic!'

And a letter is really a kind of magic. It is only a sheet of paper with some signs on it. But it tells what is going on ten, twenty, a hundred or a thousand miles away. Through these signs, we, sitting at our breakfast tables, can see homes over wide seas, and the people living in them, and baptisms, and marriages, and sick-beds and funerals. By these signs commands come from far countries, and merchants in this land rise and go to the market, or the exchange, or the bookstore, or the house of a neighbour, and do the biddings of those who wrote them down. And by these signs the secrets of one heart are carried into another; and two hearts know the secrets instead of one.

II. The Lord has always been a letter writer. He has written His letters on the blue sky and on the green earth. Summer and winter, springtime and harvest are sentences from one of His letters. He wrote ten words once, thousands of years ago, on sheets of stone at Mount Sinai, and those words are read still in every part of the earth. He has written two long letters to men in the Bible: the one is called the Old Testament, the other the New Testament, and those letters have been copied thousands of times, and are being sent to and fro among all the nations of mankind.

But from the beginning He said: 'It is not enough for Me that I write on the sky and the field, or on leaves of stone or paper. I want something better still to write My letters on. I will only be satisfied when men allow Me to write My letters on their hearts; and when I can lay My heart with all its

secrets on the hearts of men and women and boys and girls, and leave the imprint of these secrets there.'

It was this His prophets said so often in the old times. They said that a day would come, a happy day, when God would write His laws no more on tables of stone, as the Ten Commandments were, but on the heart. That day came when Jesus came. He made His words go into the hearts of those who listened to Him. It was all the same as if He had written on their hearts, and these hearts had become letters from Christ.

So Paul gives that name to the boys and girls and the men and women who have let Christ write the secrets of His heart on theirs. He calls them epistles of Christ—letters written on the fleshly leaves of the heart. And there is nothing better in the world for a boy or girl than to be a letter of this kind for Christ.

III. Some years ago the people living in Paris were surrounded by the German army, and could neither get out themselves, nor have anybody coming in. They were besieged by that army, and all the while the siege lasted neither bread, nor milk, nor coals, nor wood, nor horse, nor cow could get in. It was a hard time, and the people suffered for want of food. But there was another thing they greatly suffered for want of—and that was news of dear ones in other parts of the world. At last those dear ones wrote letters on the first page of the *Times* newspaper in London. Then a photographer made a copy of that first page so small that it was only the size of a penny stamp. Then those tiny pages were tied under the wings of doves and carried by them over the heads of the German army into Paris. There the photographers made the tiny papers large again. And in this way the people in Paris got letters from the dear ones far away.

The Lord Jesus does something like this in writing His letters on young hearts. He has a great deal to say: but the hearts of children are too small to receive all His words. So the Lord makes His letter small, so small that it can all be printed on a child's heart. And then as years go on and the body grows tall, the heart grows larger and larger, and the letters grow with the growth of the heart, and when boys and girls come to be young men and women they find that the loving Jesus has written nearly all the Bible on their hearts.

IV. But sometimes it is only a single sentence He writes. During a very cold winter, between twenty

and thirty years ago, there were two stories in the newspapers which went to every heart. A poor actor left Inverness for the town of Cromarty, where he was engaged to play. He had his little girl with him, a child of seven or eight. Snow had already begun to fall when he set out. But by and by a storm arose, and the snow fell so thickly that all the sky became dark with it, and the poor travellers lost their way. In a day or two, half-way to Cromarty, at a lonely turn of the road, where there was some shelter, the two were found buried in the snow, and dead. But it was noticed that the child was wrapped round with the father's overcoat, which he had taken from himself to keep her warm.

The cold was so great that year that many poor people died of it in their very houses, where they had neither fire nor food. Among those who died was a lonely mother in one of our cities. She was found cold dead on the floor of her home, and nearly naked, but beside her was her living child, living and warm, well wrapped up in the clothes which the mother had taken from her own body.

What were those two : the poor actor who stripped himself of his coat to keep warm his child : the poor mother who went nearly naked to keep her baby alive ? They were letters written by Christ and sent out to be read of all, letters written with one of the deepest secrets of His heart. What He wrote on those two hearts was sacrifice, pity, love, like God's. Just as those two acted, Christ would have acted if He had been in their places. It was even so He did act, when on the cross He died for man. He took His own life and wrapped us round with it, that we might not die but live. And he would have every one of us to act to others as He acted towards us. And on our hearts, as on the hearts of those two of whom I have told, He desires to write pity and self-sacrifice, and kindness and love.

V. I shall never forget the winter in which those two died. I had gone to reside in a little country town among the hills, and a great snowstorm came on the very first week I was there. Day and night the snow continued to fall. The roads were blocked up, the stage coaches could not leave. At last the little town was cut off from the rest of the world. It so happened that I had promised to be at a meeting in a neighbouring town about eight miles off. And I wanted to fulfil my promise. So I got a friend to help me to find the way, and with a second friend who was staying with me we set forth. The whole country, far as the eye could see, was one unbroken sheet of snow. The roads were buried. The very hedgerows were not to be seen. Not a foot mark nor track of a wheel was to be seen. We were the first since the snow began to attempt the journey.

When we had worked our way about three miles, we saw one other traveller coming towards us. It was the letter-carrier with the mail-bag for the town we had left. We could not help thinking him a wonderful sight. There was no other being on that white waste of snow. But what he represented was

more wonderful than himself. He represented the government of the country. Humble though he was, he was a public servant. Thousands of other servants, on other hills, on other roads, would be doing the same service which he was trying to do. Then we thought of the letters in his bag. Then of the letters in other bags. Then of all those letters as filled with things interesting one way or other to those who should receive them. And we thought of the government as the power which was sending them all on to the persons to whom they were addressed.

And then this thought came into our minds : There is a greater government than ours—the government of God—and that too is sending forth over all the land—throughout all the world—letters written not on paper with ink, but on the hearts of men and women, and boys and girls, and written by Christ Himself. Then we remembered the words in second Corinthians : 'The epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God'.

VI. It was Paul who wrote those words. It is very helpful always when Paul says a word like this to know why he says it. He was sending a letter to Christian people in Corinth to whom he had often preached. But he knew that there were some among them who did not care for his preaching, and also had spoken evil about himself. He did not like to have evil spoken about him : no good man does. But Paul did not like it because evil words spoken about him were all the same as if they were spoken against the Gospel he preached. And as he is writing this comes into his mind, and he stops for a moment and asks himself : Shall I reply to the evil words ? But he does not reply to them. He only began his writing again, and says : 'Do I really need to defend myself before you ? Do you know me so little that I should have to bring a letter of commendation to you ? Must I get other people to tell you that I am not a bad man ? Surely that cannot be needful when I am writing to my Corinthian friends. You are written on my heart ; I am written on yours. You are my best letter of commendation. If anybody speaks ill of me I appeal to you and to your Christian life. It was through me Christ made you Christian. He wrote the secrets of His heart on your lives ; and I, unworthy although some think me, was His penman when He did so. You are epistles of Christ, living epistles, and it was my preaching which Christ used to make you that.'

No evil speaker could answer back to that. A Christian life is like a letter filled with the words of Christ. If the people to whom Paul had preached were now like Christ, it was a proof that Christ Himself had written that likeness on their hearts.

VII. A dear friend of mine when she was a little girl went to live at Cape Breton. At that time letters arrived but once a month from this country. There was no post office to leave the bags at ; there was only a great open road through the forest, and little foot-roads from the village leading up to it. The letter-carrier as he passed each of these foot-roads got

out the letters from his bag which were to go that way, and dropped them into a box that was fixed on a tree. Then somebody came up from the village with a key and opened the box and took the letters away. It was my friend who had this duty to do. She had a long walk of many miles before she came to the end of the narrow foot-road, then she opened the box, and often, she used to tell, the tears would come into her eyes when there were no letters, or letters with black borders; and when she got letters and took them back, and sometimes found that one now and again was unpleasant or silly, everybody was vexed.

I sometimes think that a school is like that letter-box in the forest. There are children at school who are like silly letters, or empty letters, and sometimes like bad letters. And I think it is so sad—it is just like my friend at Cape Breton coming miles through the lonely forest for letters and finding none, or finding only letters that were bad—when a young boy or girl is sent to a school, and finds no one there on whose heart Jesus has written His tenderness or truth or love. But it is a blessing which words cannot tell, when coming to a school, the young comer finds hearts and lives on which Christ has written His love.

You remember the story in *Tom Brown's School Days* about the gentle boy who knelt down the first night he came to say his prayers, and the rude fellows who made a mock of him? But he found one there on whose heart Christ had written, who stood up for him. And a great blessing came into the school through this one gentle boy, and that other brave lad who defended him, being epistles written by Christ. What was written on their hearts came to be written by and by on the hearts of those who had mocked.

I will give you therefore a prayer to offer up at school. Say to God: 'O my Father, blot out folly if Thou seest it written on my heart; blot out everything there that is a grief to Thee, and write Thy name and law instead; and make me a clear, well-filled epistle, to tell of the goodness I have found in Thee'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 73.

## ALL FOR JESUS

2 CORINTHIANS V. 8.

In the fifth verse of the eighth chapter of second Corinthians these words occur:—

They 'gave their own selves to the Lord'.

From this text I wish to speak a little about self-consecration.

It is the privilege and duty of all of us to consecrate ourselves to God. We may all be priests to God in Christ. And giving ourselves to serve God we must keep nothing back. We must be all for Jesus. This is the truth I wish to enforce.

I ask then:—

**I. Your Eye for Jesus.**—What a beautiful and what a curiously-formed organ the eye is! One

could write a long lecture or a volume in description of it. You will find in books such descriptions of its form, and seat, and different parts, and varied defences, as would delight and surprise you. But what I wish you to think of here is the wonderful use it serves. It enables us to see. To see! Oh, what a world of marvel and beauty is covered by that little word! Have you ever thought what a strange thing sight is? Some one calls it a diffused and subtle touch. So it is. I close my eyes, and can only touch what my hand reaches. I open them, and, looking out at the window where I am writing, I touch trees, fields, distant houses, more distant hills, still more distant skies. I have a kind of hand to reach the very stars. Wonderful, beautiful vision! But there is something in the mind like to this, more subtle, and swift, and wondrous still. It is thought—the vision of the soul. Try how swift it is. I name five or six places, and as fast as you read them your thoughts are in the places named—London, Calcutta, the moon, the sun, the stars, the throne of God in heaven. In a few seconds you have travelled miles not to be measured. You have seen all these far distant objects with the eye of the soul. Now I want this eye, this thinking power, for Jesus. You are always busy thinking. But how much is the Saviour in your thoughts?

I ask—

**II. Your Ear for Jesus.**—The ear, too, is a most curious organ. Outside, as you see it, how interesting to notice the winding passages and tunnelled porchway leading in to the chamber of audience! Is it not very wonderful to think how, when a minister or other public speaker addresses a multitude, he should be able, by the moving of his lips, to send his words on invisible wings in through the gate of the ear to the minds and souls of hundreds? Now Jesus made this wonderful ear, with all its fittings, to receive sound. If, then, He speaks Himself, should we not hear Him? But, you say, Christ does not speak to our ears. He did once speak on earth, to the very ears of men. He might still do so. He once spoke to Paul out of heaven, after He had gone up. And still, through the Bible and through providence, in the church, in the school, in the sick-room, He speaks to us in effect. It is all the same as if we heard Him. And so Paul says about Him, 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven'. And when I ask 'ear for Jesus,' I ask attention to what He says, and obedience to what He commands. See what I wish, in the posture of good and happy Mary, when 'she sat at Jesus' feet, hearing His word'. Humbly hearken to Jesus; take pleasure in reading and hearing about Him; do His will, as if you heard Him call you from the skies. One day your ear, cold in the grave, will open to His voice; and after you have risen, He will speak words to you. He will say Come, or Depart. Which would you wish it to be? Oh, hearken to Him now, when He says, Come! and He will not change the word at the last day. But, again, I would have—

**III. Your Hand for Jesus.**—Were you ever present



at a marriage in Scotland, and did you notice how, at the minister's request, the bridegroom and bride joined hands, while they promised to be faithful to each other? I have always thought that simple ceremony of joining hands a touching one. It is a pledge on the part of the married—a seal to their promises to be true and kind to one another all their lives through. Or did you ever see men strike a bargain? Then, perhaps, you heard one of them say, to conclude it, 'Here's my hand on it,' and so they shook hands together. I wish your hand for Jesus in a sense which these customs suggest. I want to have you pledged to be Christ's—'joined to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten'. You write with your hand, you subscribe your name with it. There is a prophecy in Isaiah that I would like to see fulfilled in you. Here it is: 'One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel'. If a letter were written to Jesus, promising to follow and obey Him, do you think you could put your name to it?

**IV. The Foot for Jesus.**—The foot walks, or runs; and in the Bible the walk or way of any person is his whole course of conduct—his manner of life, in short. There are evil ways and good ways. Hear what Solomon says about the first: 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' Solomon's father sings much about the good way, as in the first Psalm. God marked out the good way; good men have trodden it from the beginning; Jesus Himself walked in it; follow you Him. Do not let your feet carry you on any sinful errand—to steal, to deceive, to break the Sabbath, to disobey parents, to go with evil companions, to enjoy sinful pleasures. Keep away from places where Jesus would be vexed and displeased to see you. But be ready, on the other hand, to run Christ's errands, to do some kind office, to prevent some evil, to perform some good, to learn some holy lesson, or practise it. Did you ever see the hill-tops at sunrise getting bright with the golden beams fast falling on them, as if some angel were walking there to tell the world below the day was coming back. Perhaps the Bible points to this when it says, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that publisheth good tidings. Oh, what a happy child around whose steps sun-hine falls wherever he goes, because he is 'running the way of God's commandments'! The heathens spoke of one of their deities at whose tread flowers sprung up from the sod, and good children's paths are like that fabled walk, full of blossoms of hope, and joy, and love. Will you not walk there? I said—

**V. Give your Lip for Jesus.**—There is a text in Hosea which speaks about rendering to God 'the calves of our lips'. Paul tells us what is meant by changing the phrase into 'the fruit of our lips,' and explaining that to mean the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving to God's name. When your lip is

asked for Jesus, your speech and your voice in song are asked for Him. If you give Him your lips, you will shun all bad words, lying, profane, foul, bitter words. You will try to speak good words, true, kind, holy.

**VI. Your Heart for Jesus.**—You cannot really give hand or eye to Him without this. As all the fingers grow out of the palm, and are but the hand divided, so all the five foregoing particulars depend on this. You give Christ nothing if you keep back the heart—you give Him all when your heart is His. He asks this, 'My son give Me thine heart'. 'Is not that a poor return,' I heard it once asked of a boy, 'to give Christ our weak hearts for all His love?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'but it is all He asks from us.' Then yield your heart, that is your love, to Christ. You cannot love Him too soon; you cannot love Him too long; you cannot love Him too much. All your heart is not more than He deserves; and when He gets it all you are happiest. Heart, then, for Jesus, that eye, ear, hand, foot, lip, may all be His also.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 52.

### POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 10.

AMONG the wonderful things mentioned in the New Testament none is more wonderful than this, that it was by poor people the good news concerning Christ was first made known. Never were poorer people than these. Poor fishermen, poor tentmakers, poor labouring men and women, poor slaves—such were the people by whom the good news was carried throughout the world. They had neither money nor fine clothing, nor lands nor fine houses. They had nothing but what they earned by the labour of their hands. They came from fishing villages, from despised little homes among the hills, from back streets in great cities. Nobody knew them. Nobody ever heard of them before. They were mocked. They were beaten with rods. They were cast into prison. Yet they were helped by God to go from place to place telling their wonderful story. And poor and despised and ill-treated though they were, they made the world rich by the story they told.

'Poor, yet making many rich': that was how Paul described them. They arrived in the great cities, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, or Philippi, and began in the first company they entered to tell their news. They had seen the Son of God on the earth. They had seen Him opening the eyes of the blind, healing the sick, raising the dead. More wonderful still, they had seen wicked men putting Him to death, and they had seen Him alive again, risen from among the dead. They were like people who had been in heaven. In a sense they had really been in heaven. They had been with the King of heaven. They had heard Him speak. They had received His blessing. They had His life in their hearts. I fancy myself sometimes telling in those meetings, where these poor people were telling their story. I see their eyes streaming with tears as they tell of the cruel sufferings the dear

Saviour had to endure. And I see the tears dried up and a glow over all their faces as they tell of His resurrection and His going up to heaven.

At those meetings people who had never heard of the kindness of God learned from the lips of these messengers that He so loved the world as to send His only Son to die for it. People who did not know the mighty power of God learned that it was so great as to break the door of the grave and bring the dead Saviour back to life. After hearing news so glad some many burst out into joyful cries. 'The great God loves us,' they said; 'and He will not leave our souls to perish, nor our bodies to lie in the dust for ever!' Great new thoughts came into their hearts, such as never had been there before. Strange new desires stirred within them and made them eager to be near to God that they might love Him and serve Him better than they had ever done. It seemed to themselves as if they had been carried up to the very door of heaven and had seen its happy life, and the Saviour who had died for them sitting on its throne, and a light of love on His face as He turned His look to where they stood.

In this way, in the days when Paul lived, the poor made many rich. But it is not back in those days only that this wonder has been seen. There never has been a time in which God did not give grace to poor people to do this very thing. It is a wonder that never ceases. We have only to open our eyes, and we shall see it in the days in which we ourselves are living. Nobody is too poor to be used in the service of the loving God. The greatest Servant He ever had upon the earth was so poor that He had not where to lay His head.

Sometimes when I stand up to speak to you, and see your faces glowing with health, and think of the bright homes in which you live, where everything comes to you like magic, where want is unknown, and remember homes of a different kind, where food is scant, where faces are pale, the thought comes into my mind that although in some things you are well off, in others, by your very well-offness, you suffer loss. You do not know the gladness over little mercies which those who dwell in such homes know. You do not know the tenderness which God shows to the people who live in these homes, nor the help which He brings into their humble lives, nor the great uses to which, through their very poverty, they are sometimes put.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 19.

### ON GIVING

2 CORINTHIANS VIII. 1-12.

I. THERE are some words which to children are a little hard to be understood in these verses.

But what they say is well worth trying to understand.

They say, first, that God gave them a great blessing—a grace.

They say, next, that this blessing was the giving

of money to help Christ's Churches which were poorer than their own Church.

They say, third, that before they gave their money to Christ for His poor Churches they had given *themselves*.

And, lastly, they say that in so acting they were just following Christ's own way of doing; for He gave *Himself* to us, that He might save us, and being rich in heaven, He came down to earth and became poor for our sakes.

Now it is this I want you to think of. It is the *grace of giving one's self* to Jesus as Jesus gave *Himself* for us.

Children as young as you have no money, or not much money, of their own to give to Christ for His poor people or for His work.

But they can give what is better than money: they can give a part of themselves.

What is it in a child that is richer and better than money? It is love.

The smallest child who understands can give that.

God says: 'Give Me thy heart'. The heart is just love.

Children are not too young to give their hearts to Jesus—to love Jesus.

Jesus likes to have the love of children coming to Him.

That is the gold and silver of heaven.

And because children cannot see the Lord Jesus Himself, He will have this love given to brothers, to sisters, to father, and mother, and schoolfellows, to friends and neighbours.

He says: 'Inasmuch as it is given to them, it is given to Christ'.

Now say: 'I will give more of myself to my mother, to my sister, my brother, than ever.

'I will not be greedy in expecting things to myself. 'I will be a giver, and what I give will be a bit of myself—my love.'

'The blessing will be, that giving to those in the house with you will be accounted giving to Christ.

In the northern city where I once spent my holidays, there were many things to see and to hear about. There were fine old churches, the old castle, old monuments on graves, and old traditions. Then there were the golf links, the beautiful sea-shore and the sea. But one of the things which I best like to call back and think about is the story of an old woman who lived there long ago, but who is still remembered for her kindness to the poor.

I am sorry I cannot tell you her name, nor the year she was born, nor when she died, but only this: the story of her good deeds. When she was living, she looked round about in this ancient town of St. Andrews, and saw that winter was a very hard time for poor old women. She saw that many of them were widows, whose husbands had been drowned at sea, and when they got to be old, and weary, and poor, they were no longer able to work as they used to do, and they felt the winter to be a sadly trying time.

So this excellent woman—she was not what people call a lady; I mean she did not belong to grand people—did not live in a fine house, did not have servants; she was just a homely, ordinary woman, belonging to the common people. Well, this good soul, seeing the old women in her neighbourhood cold and ill-clad in winter, and without much fire, said to herself: 'I will save up whatever I can save, I will spend nothing on myself that I can do without,' and in this way she gathered together, by saving and sacrifice, what people about her might call a good bit of money; not thousands, oh no, nor hundreds even; perhaps as much as a hundred and fifty pounds. And she put this money aside, and she gave it first to God, and then in trust to certain magistrates and others in St. Andrews, to be invested as she desired, and the yearly proceeds to be paid out in coal to poor old women in that town; and winter by winter, as the winter comes round, there is the sum of five pounds, the savings of this old lady (you now see she was a very real lady), spent in buying coal—ten carts of coal. That means ten poor old women who will be warm instead of cold, because this old lady had pity for all such in her heart, and denied herself many luxuries, and even comforts, in order to lay up this money for the poor women.

Now think, as long as Scotland lasts there will be these ten carts of coal for so many poor old women in St. Andrews.

There are names in the almanac of saintly ladies who lived long ago. This lady's name is not in any almanac, but I am sure when the poor widow who gave the two mites is spoken of in the Great Day this old St. Andrews' saint will be counted worthy to stand beside her.

It is said: 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'. See how great a lending this is to the Lord; it goes on year by year, even after the giver is dead.

II. (Heb. xiii. 16).—This is the counsel to-day—'To do good and to communicate'.

I will tell you a little story and then give my lesson.

A good many years ago I heard of a young lady who was blind. Her parents were wealthy, and had their blind daughter taught to do everything that was possible for blind people to do. She was trained to be a good musician, and she had a good voice. It did people good to hear her singing a hymn and accompanying it on the piano; and although hers was a lonely life, yet she resolved to be active and useful. So she searched out all the blind children and blind people in her neighbourhood, and in one way and another tried to do them good.

Now among the blind people in the town where she lived there was a very rough-speaking man, a pauper, who had a fine family of children, all except one little girl, and she was blind like himself.

Now, it is strange to say, the blind man could not endure his own blind child, and often beat her cruelly if she stumbled, or was the occasion of an accident.

My blind young lady heard of this poor lonely ill-treated child, and she set out one day, crossed the town, went up the narrow street in which the child's family lived, and found the father standing at the door.

'Well,' he said, 'who are you?'

'I am blind Miss Hill.'

'And what do ye want?'

'I want to see your blind daughter.'

'And what do ye want with her?'

'I would like to teach her to read and sew.'

'What will ye gie me if I let you teach my lassie?'

'Well,' she said, 'I do not think I should give you anything.'

'Then ye'll no get her, and ye'll no see her.'

The young lady, however, did not mean to be put off in that way. So she came day by day, and got the same reception, until one day she found the father absent, and went in.

The mother received her gladly. The little child knew nothing about learning, but she thought the lady could protect her, and whispered, 'Will ye keep my father from beating me?' But the father heard of the visit, and stood out, and said unless he was paid for it he would not allow the child to be taught.

At last Miss Hill agreed to give him sixpence a week, and she has been giving the churlish boor that for more than a year.

It is a sight to see the poor blind child setting out from the poor home, hurrying, groping her way, right shoulder forward, every day, to be in time at the home of her lady teacher, learning to read, to sew, to knit, and resolving, like her teacher, to do good.

III. **Contentment** (1 Tim. vi. 6; Heb. xiii. 5).—Thinking over the lesson I gave you in the last chapter, that God has other ways of making people rich than by giving them money, I find that He bestows *graces* on His people, old and young, which shine forth, and make glad the circle in which they are seen.

Of these graces one kept coming back to my mind as very good, and as one of the most enriching gifts which a boy or girl could receive.

This good thing is *contentment*.

If boy or girl, man or woman, had all the gold and silver in the world and yet had not contentment, they would not be happy.

But if one who had neither gold nor silver had contentment, he would be happy.

'Godliness with contentment is great gain.'

'Be content with such things as ye have,' and this story will show you what contentment means.

In a German village one day the village school was coming out. The children rushed out; they began to jump and run. Many made off to the fields; others went into the playground and began to play at ball and other games. At the end of all and last came a little lad who, through an accident when he was very young, was lame, and had to walk with crutches. He saw his school-fellows leaping and running, and he seemed to be as happy, looking at



their happiness, as if he were leaping and running himself.

There happened to be passing that day a stranger from a distant town, a writer of books. His heart was touched by the sight of the poor boy, looking on but unable to join in the play of his schoolmates; and he went near to him.

'Are you sorry that you cannot play like the others?' said the stranger.

'No, sir; I am quite happy too. I have a starling at home that can speak, and I have a linnet that sings. Mother is very kind to me; and I have books.'

'But when you are grown up and a man, what will you do to earn your bread?'

'Well, I shall be a cobbler. I shall be able to sit and work. I shall have a room to work in, and I shall keep birds in the room to sing to me and keep me company. And with the money I get for the shoes I make I shall buy food for my mother and myself.'

The stranger walked with the lad down the road. At a cottage door he saw the boy's mother looking out for him, with a face filled with love. The linnet and the starling saw the boy coming, and began to speak and sing to him. And the boy's face glowed with joy.

'Ah!' said the stranger to himself, 'that boy is happier than I am.'

It was contentment that enabled the boy to be so happy.

He took his lameness as God's gift: his mother, his starling, his linnet, his own happy heart, were God's gifts too.

He was content with such things as he had. His 'contentment was great gain'.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 106.

### HOW TO THANK GOD FOR JESUS

'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.'—2 CORINTHIANS IX. 15.

I AM going to take that one word Gift, and break it up letter by letter, and make each letter stand for an initial. And we will pray 'that God will teach us so, how better to give thanks for Jesus.

I. G then will stand for **Grow like Him**. When we begin to grow like Jesus, then we thank God for Him.

*Have you been planted?* That is the question. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. There is the first secret of all growth. No prayers, no tears, no toil will ever make us Christlike without *that*. First, we must lie in Jesus' bosom, as earthly things lie in the bosom of the earth, and then the constraining love of Christ will work such wonders with us, that old things pass away, and all things become new. Have you been planted?

Or put it in another way. One of the great treats in store for you when you grow older, will be to read the writings of a scholarly and saintly doctor, Sir Thomas Browne. And there is one piece of his I

want you all to read. It is his Letter to a Friend. In that Letter he tells the story of a young man's deathbed, and there was one strange thing Sir Thomas noticed in that dying man. As death drew near his features changed. He lost his own look, and through his features there seemed to shine the features of a relative. Death cancelled self for him, and made him grow in strange likeness to another whose blood ran in his veins. Living, these lineaments were concealed. Dying, they stood out evidently. 'He looked like his uncle, the lines of whose face lay deep and invisible in his healthful visage before.'

That was what Sir Thomas Browne saw in his dying friend. I sometimes wonder if it did not seem to him a shadowing of deeper things. For there is a higher life than the life of the body. There is another death than the ceasing of the heart to beat. It is the death to sin and self. It is the crucifixion with Christ Jesus. And of this be sure. This you and I must learn. Only as we approach that death, and daily draw nearer to that death in fuller surrender and heartier consecration, will the lineaments of Jesus, sealed on us by the Holy Spirit in the hour of conversion, begin to show through ours. Until at last, when we are truly dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, then shall we truly live, and yet not we, for Christ shall live in us. If any man would grow like Me, says Jesus, first, he must be born again. And then, if any man would grow like Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.

Though born again, and hungering and thirsting daily, for all that, growth into His likeness *must be slow*. I believe it is now accepted by all learned men that this great world has been built up out of atoms. All that we see has been made out of these particles so small that the most powerful glass is powerless to see them. The stars that shine by night, the mountains that lift their heads up to the clouds, the noble forest trees, the various beauties of ten thousand herbs, all these, under the fingers of a creating and a devising God, have been fashioned from molecules infinitely small. Not from original masses was creation formed. But all its grandeur, majesty, and beauty have been slowly wrought from particles invisibly minute. So with the massive forms of life: the majesties of character: the Christlike heart. They too under the Spirit's hand are slowly fashioned from the tiniest births.

II. The second letter I will stand for **Imitate Him**. Would you thank God for Jesus? Then begin now to imitate the Master. There is a proverb which says, Imitation is the sincerest flattery. God wants no flattery, but He does want thanksgiving, and imitation of the right kind is one of thanksgiving's choicest forms.

III. And now we come to F, and F shall stand for **Follow Him**. I wonder if you ever tried to count how often the Bible uses that word *follow*. I could tell that the Word of God meant you and me to be followers, not leaders. The one word is so much

more frequent than the other. Jesus said, Follow Me! Lo! we have left all and followed Thee, said Peter. I follow after, said Paul. We think of Peter and James and Paul as leaders. They never thought of themselves as leaders—always as followers. This was their joy and crown and glory, that they followed Jesus.

Christ calls for volunteers to-day. Who will take Him for Captain, and donning shield and breastplate, make life a battle for the right? That will give stir and movement to the dreariest day. That will bring back to you the spirit of the knights who jostled in the tourney. No life is commonplace if Christ be in it. Who enlists *now*?

Jesus, still lead on  
Till our rest be won!

IV. Lastly comes T, and that must stand for *Trust Him*. But I have spoken too long to you, and must close. I want you all to trust Him. I wish you all to follow Him. I would fain see every one of you imitating Jesus, and growing more like Him every day. What joy there would be in heaven over that! God waits to accept it as the richest sacrifice of thanksgiving for His unspeakable gift.—G. H. MORRISON, *The Oldest Trade in the World*, p. 66.

# THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

## OLD SELF AND NEW SELF

'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'—GALATIANS II. 20.

I DARE SAY you have often been disposed to think that these chapters of the Galatians are very hard to be understood; and perhaps they may seem to you rather uninteresting, and a repetition of the same thing over and over again. Well, they are not easy in themselves; but we make them much harder, because we read them in such short chapters. If I were telling a story, however interesting it might be in itself, if you came in when I had been going on for half an hour, stayed five minutes, and then went out again, you would be likely, to use the common expression, to make neither head nor tail of what I was saying, and to think it very dull. Now St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is one continued argument; and if we take a little bit out of the middle, and read that by itself, though we may pick up three or four verses here and there, we shall hardly be likely to understand the whole drift of what the Apostle is saying; nay, perhaps, we may understand the very opposite of what he meant us to understand. And this difficulty is as old as the time of St. Peter, who says that in St. Paul's Epistles 'are some things hard to be understood; which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction'.

Now I am not going to enter into this Epistle, so as to explain to you St. Paul's reason for writing it, or to show you what his argument is; I will only tell you that, in reading it, and the former part of the Epistle to the Romans, you must always remember two things. The one, that wherever the Apostle speaks of the *Law*, he does not mean the Law of God—that Law, according to which we have to walk here, that Law, according to which we have to be judged hereafter; no, he always means the Jewish Law. And the other, that when he speaks of *faith*, he does not mean that which we generally now call faith, the believing in God's Word because it is His Word. No; he means only the Christian Law—or if you like it better, the *Gospel*. Almost always when he uses the word *faith*, you would understand more clearly what he means if it were now translated *the Gospel*. So in the beginning of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which many people have written so much that is untrue about, it only means: 'Therefore, being justified,' that is, made righteous by the Gospel, that is, by the way the Gospel points out, namely, our dear Lord's passion, 'we have peace with

God, through our Lord Jesus Christ'. And so in a great many other places.

I. Now let us see the meaning of the text I read you just now. It begins: 'I am crucified with Christ'. How is that? Why, you must remember how fond St. Paul is of telling us what we all know so sadly in ourselves, that we have, so to speak, two selves, two I's: the old bad self which we get from Adam, and which he calls the old man; the new better self which is given us at baptism, which he calls the new man: the old bad I, which says, when we are offended, 'I will be angry, I will revenge myself; I think it is a glorious thing to have my own way; I will hate such an one, because he or she has spited me'; and the better self which says, 'I will forgive, because Christ forgave; I will not revenge myself because He, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not'. There is the old bad self, which says, 'I will not learn this lesson; I will not do this task, because it is so much trouble; I will take my ease and enjoy myself instead'; and there is the better I, the I in which the Holy Ghost speaks, which says, 'But I will take pains about it, because my dear Lord laboured when He was on earth; because this is what He meant by taking up the cross and following Him; because He has promised that, if I suffer here, I shall reign hereafter'. Have you not sometimes felt those two selves sometimes as plainly striving within you, as if they were two different persons? I know you have; I have often; no one who is now in the kingdom of heaven but has often; ay, and those unhappy ones who departed out of this world out of the grace of God, they know what the struggle was, but sadly, sadly they fought in it, and allowed the worst self to be conqueror over the better. That is the great happiness of those that die in the Lord: that henceforth there is no more this constant struggle between the two selves.

II. There is a story which I should like you to read, which represents three children setting out on a pilgrimage to the Heavenly City. But with them, wherever they go, goes a troublesome, wicked, mischievous companion, called Inbred Sin—'the old man' of St. Paul: and yet sometimes he is so pleasant and so droll, that though they know he is trying to do all he can to hinder their ever getting to the Heavenly City, they cannot help liking him. Many a trick he plays them; many and many a time he leads them out of the way. But at last, when they come to the Black River that has no bridge, and that flows between them and the Heavenly Land, then how Inbred Sin shrinks back from it! how he shrieks and groans, and cries out!—and behold, when they have got through, and



come forth on the other side, he has been drowned in the river, and they have done with him for ever.

Well; and that is what St. Paul means here: I am crucified with Christ. As our Lord was nailed to the cross, which is a very slow, lingering, painful death, but a very certain death, so our old nature, our troublesome self, our Inbred Sin, was nailed to the cross at our baptism; and all we have to do is to keep him there. That is when he received his death wound; and because he is a part of ourselves, we feel all the pain, the lingering pain of his destruction: but destroyed he will be, at the very moment when we give up our last breath. In the meantime he sometimes struggles very hard, often contrives to do some mischief; but only by our own faults can he really hurt us. I have seen a picture of the Crucifixion, in which the wicked thief, struggling and wrestling to get free, has torn one of his hands from the cross; and something like this our evil nature will sometimes do. Well: that is what St. Paul means when he says, I, that is the worse I, the sinful I, am crucified with Christ.

III. And he immediately goes on: 'nevertheless I live'. Do you know how young cuckoos are born? The cuckoo never builds a nest of her own: she drops her egg into some other bird's nest, generally a sparrow's; and when it is hatched, the young cuckoo, being so much larger and stronger, contrives to get to itself the worms that the mother-bird brings, and so starves her young ones. Sometimes, too, he turns the true young ones, one after another, out of the nest, and so gets all the food to himself. But sometimes these young ones, seeing that if they do not get rid of the cuckoo he will get rid of them, make a great effort, and heave him over the nest—and then he falls down, and dies on the ground beneath the tree. This is just like our two natures—one must kill the other. Well, then, I—that is the worse, the sinful I—am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I—that is the better I, the I that came of baptism—live.

Well, just as we think we understand this very plainly, we hear something to make it more difficult nevertheless: 'I live, yet *not* I, but Christ liveth in me'. Ah! and how is that? why, take the same example again; and we may take it the more boldly, because you know our dear Lord Himself says, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' When those young sparrows have pushed the cuckoo out of their nest, they live; yet they do not live of themselves; they could not live unless the mother-bird brought them worms or crumbs, or what else she can find for them, every quarter of an hour. So unless our Lord helped our better selves to keep alive, to do His will, to do what of our old nature we hate, to leave undone what of our old nature we love, we never could get on for a moment.

God says to you, what Jehu said to the people in the palace of Jezreel, Who is on my side, who?—I hope you will all try to give the same answer. Try to make this, then, the chief end and aim of you all,

that you may each and all serve God ten times better than ever before!—J. M. NEALE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 174.

## GENTLENESS A FRUIT OF GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

(Whitsunday)

'The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.'—GALATIANS V. 22.

THE greatest results are accomplished by gentle, quiet influences.

I have chosen this subject now, because this is Whitsunday, the day on which this Blessed Spirit came down from heaven, and rested upon the Apostles, at Jerusalem, more than eighteen hundred years ago. Before He left the world our Saviour promised that He would send the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to be with His people always; and on this day, ages ago, this pledge was kept.

What greater gift, what greater love,  
Could God on man bestow?  
Angels for this rejoice above,  
Let man rejoice below.

The word *gentleness* (which is one of the virtues which the Holy Spirit helps us to cultivate) means, in the text, *goodness* and *kindness*. It is the opposite of a harsh, crooked, and crabbed temper. It is a disposition easy to be pleased, and in our idea of this Christian gentleness we must include mildness and politeness.

Religion sweetens the temper, teaching us to be kind and patient and thoughtful of the feelings and the comfort of others.

St. Paul, who wrote the text, was a polished gentleman in its highest and truest sense.

It is a pity that the word *gentleman* is so often improperly used. What is a gentleman? Is it always one who is rich? Is it the man dressed in the most fashionable clothes, and who takes off his hat with a graceful flourish when he salutes his friends? No; the veriest blackguard might have plenty of money; and wear a coat in the height of the fashion; and move about with the air of a dancing-master. A *gentleman* is one who *does gentle things*, and who has kind and unselfish feelings. And it is worth remembering that the Holy Spirit of God is ready to teach us to be gentle. '*The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.*'

The power of gentleness is really irresistible. The blustering wind could not make the traveller take off his cloak—but the only effect was that he wrapped himself up the more tightly in it. When, however, the gentle sunbeams shined softly and steadily on him, he was glad to remove it.

Gentleness must not be confounded with cowardice and with a mean truckling spirit.

No one would doubt General Washington's courage; and yet he could practise gentleness. After the Revolution was well over, and the country had become settled and quiet, he was making a long journey in his carriage, attended by several gentle-

men who travelled in a conveyance of their own. One afternoon, as night was fast approaching, and they were all anxious to reach the neighbouring town before dark, they found the road almost blocked up by a large wagon drawn by four horses, proceeding at a snail's pace.

Wishing to go faster than this wagon, a gentleman in the foremost carriage called out to the teamster with a lordly air, to turn out and let them pass. As might be supposed, the man merely looked angry and refused to budge. Seeing how matters were, General Washington spoke politely to the driver, and explaining why they wished to hasten forward, asked him to allow the carriages to go by. The power of gentleness prevailed in a moment; and the weary travellers were soon enjoying a good supper at the village inn.

A Quaker physician in Philadelphia, who was very kind to the poor, was hastening in his old gig to visit a patient, when he found his way stopped by a cart in a narrow street already half blocked up with piles of brick and lumber.

Having waited patiently for several minutes, the doctor requested the drayman to let him pass.

The man had heard of the kind physician, but not having seen him before, he did not suspect this plain-talking Quaker to be the person, and began to swear at old 'straight coat,' flatly refusing to open the way.

'Well, friend,' said the doctor, 'all I have to observe is this; if thee should get sick, or if thy family should ever be in distress, send for Dr. P——, and he will do thee all the good he can.'

The heart of the drayman was softened at once; and stammering out the best apology he could, he made haste to clear the path for the physician. If he had returned harsh words for the driver's curses, he might have sat in his gig until midnight.

In the case of quarrels among schoolboys, the gentle one is always sure to come off victorious in the end. The fact is, a kind word hurts much more than a blow.

Two little boys were once rolling a hoop over the frozen ground, and in running carelessly after it Gerald, the younger being behind, came in contact with his brother Thomas, and both fell down with violence, the younger on top of the elder. Thomas was severely bruised and rose up in a terrible passion. He scolded Gerald in the most offensive words he could think of, and then began to beat him. Instead of crying out or striking back, the little fellow put his hand into his pocket hurriedly, fumbled about among his treasures, and drawing out a stick of candy thrust it into Thomas's mouth, even while he was scolding and beating him.

Thomas instantly stopped, and looked confused and ashamed. And thus his wrath was turned aside by the spirit of gentleness which his younger brother manifested.

I ought to say for your comfort and encouragement that such a spirit is not *natural* to us, nor easy to acquire; and yet the Holy Spirit will help us to gain it whenever we show a real desire to do so. The

Holy Spirit, gentle and loving Himself, is the best teacher we can have.

The *dove*, as you know, is often taken as the emblem of *gentleness*, and so in the pretty hymn—

Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,  
With all Thy quickening powers;  
Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,  
And that shall kindle ours.

Let us all try to be gentle, and pray to God's Holy Spirit to help us to become so.

If ministers of the Gospel could always be gentle, if parents and teachers could be so, and if boys and girls would put themselves under the guidance and instruction of the Blessed Spirit, then, indeed, would heaven be begun, even upon this earth.—JOHN N. NORRIS, *Milk and Honey*, p. 98.

### SOWING AND REAPING

'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'—

GALATIANS VI. 7.

A MAN who lived a long time ago wrote this, 'If you take away little children out of the city, it is like taking the springtime out of the year'. A pretty thought! Then this is your springtime; and if it is your springtime, it is your 'sowing' time, because we always 'sow' in spring. And you are all 'sowing', you cannot help it. You are all 'sowing seeds'. Everybody every moment, at this moment, is 'sowing seeds'.

I. Some people 'sow the wind'. Will you look at Hosea viii. 7—'They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind'. Now I think there are some people who, though they do not 'sow wickedness,' sow folly—'the wind'.

I know what I should call it, if boys and girls were very idle when they ought to be doing their duty and learning their lessons; or playing away their time, when they ought to be getting wisdom, they are 'sowing the wind'. Or suppose a person is very fond of reading silly novels and love stories, I say, 'It will come to nothing. You are sowing the wind.' Supposing a boy to be very ambitious; thinking about nothing but what a wonderful boy he wants to be; you are 'sowing the wind'. Supposing a girl in the school thinks only about popularity; you are 'sowing the wind'. Or a little girl thinks about dress—looks much at herself in the glass; you are 'sowing the wind'. And what will you 'reap'? Remember what God says, 'the whirlwind'.

I will tell you about a young man. When he was a boy he had a great many good feelings; and often said he was very religious. When he went to college, he became what is called a very ambitious young man. He did not care very much about the Bible, but wanted to be great in this world, and particularly wanted to be great in politics.

His father and mother wished him to be a clergyman; he said, 'No; I will be a lawyer'. He thought that would be the best way of getting into Parliament, and then he might become one of the queen's ministers. His God was power, and his heaven was fame. He

thought about little else. I have known many such. So he went on. God strove with him at one time particularly; but he put it away—he resisted it, and thought only about politics.

When he left college he married a wife, and had a little child; and he went into a government house where he thought he could rise. Thus he went on 'sowing,' and 'sowing the wind'.

By and by he applied for a very high situation—one of the highest he could get. His application went to the Prime Minister; and he thought he was going to 'reap' the highest honours.

Just after he had done this, his wife and little child died of the typhus fever, and he took it, and was laid upon his bed—poor, sick young man! without any comfort. No Jesus Christ to look to; no peace in his conscience. He became very sick, and very miserable.

One day while he was lying on his sick-bed there came from the Prime Minister the long-expected paper, appointing him to the office he had been seeking. His parents thought it might do him good if it were shown to him. When he saw the paper he rose up in his bed, his consciousness seemed to return to him—he took it in his hands; but he shuddered all over. Within three or four hours afterwards he died! He 'sowed the wind, and he reaped the whirlwind'.

II. Some 'sow mixed seed'. In Leviticus and Deuteronomy it is said the Jews were never to 'sow mixed seed'. Perhaps it might mean that they must not be as some people are, half Jews and half for the world—trying to get the best of this world, and the best of the next also. I am afraid a great many persons are 'sowing mixed seeds'. God will not have it.

I will tell you who 'sowed' it. Lot did. He was a righteous man; but he went to wicked Sodom because it was a fertile country; and look at the trouble he came into. Reuben also 'sowed mixed seed'; and he never 'excelled'. Do not 'sow mixed seed'.

I shall mention three good 'seeds'. Will you look at Hosea x. 12. Let us all read it together. 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.' What does it mean? I wonder whether a very little girl could tell me what it means. I do not think she could. Some could tell me the true meaning of this verse. Jesus Christ is our 'righteousness'—for we are all bad before God! nobody is 'righteous' before God. If we are so, it must be because we love Jesus Christ. Then God will see us in Him. So that He is our 'righteousness,' we cannot be 'righteous' in any other way. No one, let him try ever as hard, or live ever as long, can be 'righteous,' except as clothed in the 'righteousness' of Jesus Christ.

Now you must 'sow in Christ'. And what will you 'reap'? 'Mercy!' Though you are a poor sinner, yet if you 'sow faith' in Jesus, you will reap mercy; and then, when you have 'sown in Jesus,' and attained 'mercy,' and your sins are forgiven, then you 'sow righteousness'; that is, speak the truth, and do everything that is honest. You will 'sow' prayers,

and prayers will come up again; you will 'sow' the reading of God's Word, and that will come up again. But you must 'sow in Christ'.

I should like to tell you something about that great man, John Wesley—he was a very great man—some of you have heard of him. When he was eighty-six years old (such an old man as that!) he was as handsome almost as ever he was, and he was very strong. He wrote in his journal, on his eighty-sixth birthday, something like this—'I am eighty-six to-day. I can write, I believe, as well as ever I could; and preach as well as ever I could. Thank God for this mercy! I feel a little pain in my eyes sometimes, but not much. I can do almost anything that ever I could. . . . How is it that I have such peace in my mind?'

Then he wrote down the reasons. 'One is, because for sixty years I rose at four o'clock; and, in most of those years, preached at five.' Wesley used to preach every day to the colliers in Gloucestershire. 'Another reason is, because I have been so much in the open air, and taken so much horse exercise; perhaps this has had something to do with it. Another thing is, I am so quiet in my mind. I have had the peace of God in my heart nearly the whole of my lifetime, and have always endeavoured to forgive everybody. And this has helped me to be such a happy old man.

'But then,' says he, 'one thing more; so many of God's children have prayed for me. But the greatest of all is, because God is so kind to me; and because He loved me when I was a boy; and, as He loved me when I was a boy, He does not now forsake me because I am an old man.'

Wesley lived till 1791, and died at the age of eighty-nine. When dying, he said to his people around him, 'The best of all is, God is with us for ever and ever'. After he had said that, he began a hymn he was very fond of,

I'll praise my Maker, while I've breath.

He said, 'I will praise, praise, praise'—he could not say more than that. He had 'sowed righteousness' when a boy, and he 'reaped in mercy'.

I will tell you a very simple story about this, which is very suitable for little children. Little Susan was one day sent by her mamma with a message. Outside the door of the house where she lived was a pile of wood; she managed to get over it, and trotted to the place and back. On arriving at home again, the woodcutter kindly lifted her over, and put her into her mother's house. Little Susan was very grateful, and said to her mamma, 'The woodcutter has been so kind to me. What can I give him?' Her mamma said, 'Well, really, I cannot tell you'. She said, 'I should like to give him my red apple'. So she did. The woodcutter said, 'May I do what I like with it?' She said, 'Oh, yes'. 'Then,' said he, 'I will take it to little Johnny—he is my little boy; he once sat on a stool, and fell off into the fire and burned himself, and he will like to have this nice apple.'

The little girl went back to her mamma, and said, 'Oh, mamma, may I not also give him my little horse



with the soldier upon it?' Her mamma gave consent; so she gave that to the woodcutter also. He went off with them; and when he reached home, his little Johnny was very much pleased. He kissed the apple, and the soldier, and the little horse.

After a little while, he said, 'Father, may I do what I like with the red apple?' 'Oh, yes,' said he. 'May I give it to Jim?' 'What!' said his father, 'to that naughty boy that puts his thumb out and makes faces at you? Do you love him?' Little Johnny said, 'Not so much as I could wish, father; but I should like to give him this apple'. So when Jim went by Johnny called him, and said, 'Here is a fine apple for you'. Jim said, 'I am sure you do not mean it for me. I cannot take it,' and he turned away very much ashamed. But Johnny would not let him go away, and Jim was obliged to take the red apple.

And what do you think he did. He went home to give it away to his brothers and sisters. They were astonished at him—it was a thing he had never done before; and from that time Jim became a kind boy. He went to work and earned twopence, and when he did so, he bought some plums and apples and gave them to Johnny; and he began to be kind to everybody. How many kind things were done through the woodcutter's kindness—by the little girl; by him; by Johnny; by Jimmy; and by him to everybody. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, and it shall be found after many days.'—JAMES VAUGHAN.

#### WHAT YOU SOW YOU REAP

'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'—  
GALATIANS VI. 7.

THESE words are true regarding three worlds. I shall say a few words about each of them. The world of *matter*, the world of *mind*, and the world of *spirit*.

I. The text is true regarding the world of **Matter**—the outer creation. If you plant flowers in your garden, flowers will grow. If you plant weeds, and nettles, and thorns, these will grow. If the farmer puts wheat-seed into his field, wheat will grow—or barley, barley will grow—or tares, tares will grow. I am told that many years since, when people first began to go from this country to Australia to till the land there, a Scotchman missed two things that were very familiar in his own glens and valleys at home. The one was the bee, and the other was the Scotch thistle. He managed to get both sent out to him. In a very short time he had swarms of busy bees murmuring around him, and honey on his table. This was all well; but I believe he came to regret having ever brought the other, the thistle, from its distant home; for the thistle-down—the seed of the plant—was soon wafted all around, and sprang up in large quantities. His wheat crop was none the better for this; neither were his neighbours' fields. That downy stranger, he had in an evil hour invited, preached to him and to many far and wide a silent sermon on my text—'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'.

II. The text is true regarding the world of **Mind**.

If you are diligent at school, and learn your lessons well, you will be sure to get on. Sowing well, you will reap in due time golden sheaves in life's after harvest. If you are idle and inattentive, and fonder of play than of your books, then you will grow up ignorant, and not be able to act your part in the world. The unsown field will produce nothing. When your neighbour's parks are green and beautiful, yours will be brown and bare.

Who, I ask, are those who have been successful in life—who have climbed up to the top of the ladder, and who by their knowledge and discoveries have made the world wiser, and their fellows better and happier? They are not the lazy, and slothful, and indolent, but rather those who resolved to do their best. They shut themselves up among their books. They continued, it may be, late at night, conning their task. They held sacred the precious hours of youth; and difficult though it was to ascend that ladder of which I have just spoken, yet up they climbed, higher and higher, until they gained the highest step. Others who started at the same time as they did, have been left far behind—with their talents wasted and their chances gone. They were sleeping and idling when the others were working. They sowed to idleness, they reaped ignorance—it may be even poverty and want.

III. The text is true regarding the world of **Spirit**. It is true of the world of Matter and the world of Mind, but it has a far more solemn truth regarding the Soul and Eternity.

The present is the sowing-time for Immortality. The soul is the field. Whatsoever we sow in this world we shall reap in the next.

Those who serve God and love Jesus, who try to be good and amiable and gentle, who are kind to their brothers and sisters and to all around them, will reap a harvest of bliss.

Those, on the other hand, who have no love for God or for His Word; who are naughty and selfish, who tell lies and say bad words, and disobey their parents, and are passionate to their brothers and sisters, are preparing for themselves a harvest of sorrow. The same thing which must make them unhappy in this world, will render them unhappy in the world to come.

Take that beautiful Bible verse for your encouragement—'Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not' (Gal. vi. 9). The Day of Judgment is the world's great Harvest-home. Jesus will then be heard saying, 'Thrust in the sickle for the harvest is ripe'. The reapers, we read, are to be the angels. May you all be gathered as golden sheaves into the Heavenly Garner by these angel-reapers: 'found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ'. May it be said of you *now*, may it be said of you *then*, may it be said of you through all eternity—'They joy before Thee, according to the joy in harvest' (Isa. ix. 3).  
—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 301.

## A GREEN ROSE

'Let us not be weary in well-doing.'—GALATIANS VI. 9.

IN our gardens it is not uncommon to find a rose-bush, which, instead of being covered with beautiful crimson roses, is covered over with little tufts of green leaves at the end of the sprigs. These green roses, as they are called, have no fragrance, no grace of shape or beauty of colour; and they produce no seed, no germ of hope for the future. There is an end of them then and there. The little leaves of which they are made up are inferior to the ordinary leaves in every respect. It is a case of floral backsliding, where the rose, instead of going forward to produce its crimson blossom, according to its natural law, goes back, owing to some defect in its nature, or to excess of nourishment, into a mere tuft of green leaves, which has not the beauty or use of the blossom, nor the beauty or use of the foliage.

In the carnation there is also a very curious variety like that of the green rose, produced by the same cause. It is called the 'wheat-ear carnation' because the blossom changes into a long green spike destitute of the usual pink colour and delicate fragrance, and looking like an unripe ear of beardless wheat. It was first found in Holland, where the carnation was at one time extensively cultivated as a favourite flower; and it is still occasionally seen as a curious monstrosity in our own gardens.

It was of a similar case of going back in the spiritual world that the Apostle Paul was thinking, when he said to the Galatian converts, 'Let us not be weary in well-doing'. It is difficult to explain in English the exquisite balancing of the words in the original Greek. The Greek word for 'weary' is a compound of *kakon*, which means *badness*; while the Greek word for 'well-doing' is a compound of *kalon*, which means *beauty or goodness*. And the meaning of the advice of the Apostle, therefore, is—Let not your goodness become badness—your beauty, deformity.

This was a tendency to which the Galatian converts were peculiarly prone. Their weariness came from a capricious, unstable nature. They began things with great enthusiasm, and soon got tired of them. They had the Celtic temperament, with all its faults and excellences. They lacked endurance. They had no power of perseverance. They liked to race along the straight white road before them, rather than to pace it slowly, step by step. They resembled the seed in

the parable, growing up rapidly in the stony ground, and producing a luxuriant braid, long before the rest of the field had sent up a single blade, but speedily withering away for lack of root.

I. In nature there are things that begin in beauty and end in corruption. The day that opens with bright sunshine often ends in gloomy clouds. The plant that sends forth a fair shoot, and gives promise of a lovely flower and abundant fruit, becomes blighted, and withers untimely. And, alas! how many experiences of the same kind are there in human life! Bright careers ending in woeful failure, glowing hopes quenched in despair. But the saddest of all such experiences is declension in religion; for the corruption of the best is the worst. The purest lily smells rankest in decay; and gold sinks deeper in the mire than rotten wood.

II. We have characters in the Bible that represent the temperament of the Galatian converts. Balaam was a man of noble gifts and grand promise. He saw the vision of God's dealings with Israel, and sympathised with it. But he descended from this lofty Pisgah of the soul to the vanities of the world, and sank to the level of his baser self, and so made shipwreck of his life. We have examples of similar declension in the case of the Church of Ephesus, which left its first love; and in the case of the Church of Pergamos, which held at last the doctrine of Balaam, and went after his covetous ways, and sank down sadly from the grand days when Antipas, Christ's faithful martyr, belonged to it. And among ourselves are there not too many examples of the Galatian temperament; young people whose spiritual life, instead of producing crimson blossoms, produces green roses that are but mere leaves of profession, and yield no fruit of righteousness, who, instead of growing better by their religion, are growing worse?

III. The danger of spiritual declension is very great. There is the same tendency in spiritual things, to lose the fresh interest and enthusiasm which gave them such a charm at the beginning, that there is in all human things. Your Christian life, left to itself, without any of its usual elements of growth, may for a time seem to put forth beautiful blossoms under the impetus it has received; but in order to grow vigorously and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, it must be planted anew in the soil of faith and love in Christ Jesus from which it sprang.—HUGH MACMILLAN, *The Spring of the Day*, p. 289.

# THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

## STEALING

'Let him that stole, steal no more.'—EPHESIANS IV. 28.

PROBABLY the most singular funeral sermon ever heard, was that which the eccentric Rowland Hill once delivered in London over the remains of his favourite servant, Roger.

'Many persons present,' remarked the preacher, looking around on the anxious faces turned towards him, as he stood perched up in his high pulpit, 'were acquainted with the deceased, and have had it in their power to observe his character and conduct. They can bear witness that for a considerable number of years he proved himself a perfectly honest, sober, industrious and religious man, faithfully performing, so far as lay in his power, the duties of his station in life, and serving God with constancy and zeal. Yet this very man was once a robber on the highway.'

You may readily imagine what astonishment these words produced, and amidst what profound silence the preacher thus went on: 'More than thirty years ago he stopped me on the public road, and demanded my money. Not at all intimidated, I argued with him; I asked him what could induce him to pursue so iniquitous and dangerous a course of life.

'His answer was, "I have been a coachman; I am out of place, and I cannot get a character; I am unable to find any employment, and am therefore obliged to do this or to starve".

'I told him where I lived, and asked him to call and see me. He promised he would, and he kept his word, I talked further with him, and offered to take him into my own service. He consented, and ever since that period he has served me faithfully, and not me only, but he has faithfully served his God. Instead of finishing his life in a public and ignominious manner, with a depraved and hardened heart, as he probably would have done, he died in peace, and, we trust, prepared for the society of just men made perfect. Till this day the extraordinary circumstance I have now related has been confined to his heart and mine. I have never mentioned it to my dearest friend.'

The practice of stealing prevails in all pagan communities. You will find many curious instances of dexterity in theft in such books as Cook's *Voyage*, and others of more recent date. Ephesus was a great city, and its inhabitants were intelligent; and yet even to the Christians there St. Paul thought it necessary to put into his letter, which was to be read aloud in church, 'Let him that stole steal no more'. We could not afford to blot out this verse from our

Bibles; the world needs it now as much as it ever did.

Almost every newspaper contains an account of house-breaking, or a bank robbery, theft in a post office, or some new and cunning device for cheating the Government. And why this prevalence of theft? Because so many never have been taught the eighth commandment, and the duty of 'keeping their hands from picking and stealing,' according to the wholesome instructions of the Catechism. Whatever is got by unfair and dishonest ways is stealing. Mean and contemptible as theft is, it is by no means confined to the poor and the degraded.

The Empress Josephine once had a beautiful red shawl sent to her from Egypt, and this made all the fashionable people in high life anxious to have red shawls also. One night at a party a countess took off hers for a few minutes, when it was stolen by a young girl in 'good society,' who was figuring among the gay butterflies at the same assembly. She denied the theft, but when the enraged countess dragged it from her shoulders, and pointed out her own initials embroidered in one corner and concealed by the fringe, the discomfiture of the guilty party was complete.

A cashier in a large city bank once told a friend that his experience there for many years had almost destroyed his confidence in human nature, declaring that hardly a day passed that somebody did not bring in a counterfeit note and try to pass it. When about to make a mark on all such bills on their own bank, as it was his duty to do, many would loudly and positively object to it. In embarrassment he would ask, 'Why, you would not pass this worthless money on anyone else?' and they would answer, without hesitation, 'Oh, I came by it honestly, and the loss ought not to fall upon me'.

The rash and reckless way in which so many engage in wild speculations, has led thousands to be dishonest who might otherwise have passed through life free from reproach. A very common mode of 'making money' is for a man to declare that he has failed in business, and to agree to pay a small sum on the dollar, on condition that those to whom he is largely in debt will let him off. The arrangement is made, because the creditors despair of getting more out of the 'bankrupt,' and yet, in the course of a year or two the man will be better off than ever, although it seldom occurs to him that he ought to show his honesty by paying his old debt.

We ought to learn to call things by their right names. If a poor, half-starved fellow in his shirt-sleeves, shivering on a cold day, slyly takes a fustian



coat worth five dollars, which is hanging out in front of a clothing store, it is spoken of by every one as *stealing*, and the culprit enjoys a few years of retirement in prison to remind him of his dreadful breach of the law. On the other hand, let a so-called *gentleman* in broadcloth run away with fifty thousand dollars from some institution in which he had an office, and how does the world regard him? As a thief? By no means. He is only a *defaulter*! And yet can you see any difference between the two cases, except it be this, that the thief in broadcloth is the worst?

Samuel Kilpin, who for a long while preached in the city of Exeter, England, related this touching story of himself:—

‘When seven years old, I was left one day in charge of my father’s shop. Pretty soon a man passed along the street with a board on his head loaded with toys, and crying aloud, “Little lambs, all white and clean, at one penny each!”

‘In my eagerness to get one, I lost all self-command, and taking a penny from the drawer I soon made the purchase. My keen-eyed mother asked how I came by the money, and I evaded the question with something like a lie.

‘The little white lamb was placed on the mantel-piece and was admired by all who saw it. To me, however, it was a source of inexpressible anguish; for day and night I heard sounding in my ears the terrible words, “Thou shalt not steal! Thou shalt not lie!”

‘Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, I went to a hay-loft where I could be alone, and prayed to God, even with tears, to pardon me for Jesus’ sake. I left the hay-loft with a load lifted from my heart, and going directly to my mother, told her the whole truth. I actually burned up the lamb in the kitchen fire, while my dear mother wept tears of joy over the penitence of her son.’

If any now listening to me are treasuring up the secret of dishonest deeds in their own bosom, let them learn from this beautiful story the duty and the happiness of a full and frank confession.

Many acts of theft are committed out of pure thoughtlessness.

What do you say of the common practice of *borrowing* books, and umbrellas, and overcoats, and money, and never remembering to return these things to the owner? Is not this stealing?

‘Horrible! horrible!’ you say; ‘but people do not mean to be dishonest.’

That may be so; but do they have such poor memories when the thing to be thought of is the hour for dinner, or for some pleasant entertainment? Are they apt to be equally forgetful when other people borrow of them?

I cannot think of a better way of applying this important subject, than to relate a little circumstance which once happened in the Sandwich Islands. A good missionary had preached a sermon on the sin of dishonesty, hoping it might not be lost upon

his hearers. The very next morning, on opening the door of his bamboo hut, he was surprised to see a great many of the islanders seated on the ground, waiting for him. The missionary kindly asked why they had called upon him so early, when one of them replied:—

‘We have not been able to sleep all night, after hearing what you said yesterday. When we were pagans, we thought it right to steal if we could do it without being found out. Yesterday you told us that God commanded people not to steal, and as we wish to mind Him we have now brought back all the things we ever took.’

One man then lifted up an axe, a hatchet, or chisel, and exclaimed, ‘I stole this from the carpenter of such a ship,’ naming the vessel; others handed back a saw or knife, and a great variety of other things, making the same candid confession.

They then insisted that the missionary should take these stolen goods, and keep them until he might have an opportunity of returning them to the owner.

May all of us try to be as honest as these poor islanders, and when the eighth commandment is read in church, let us pray most earnestly, ‘Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law’.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 133.

#### THE WARNING AGAINST GRIEVING THE SPIRIT

‘Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.’—EPHESIANS IV. 30.

The Spirit of God is given to us to be our teacher and helper in trying to love and serve God. We please this blessed Spirit when we listen to His gentle whispers, and try to carry them out. We grieve this Holy Spirit when we do not mind His teachings, and try to do the things which He wants us to do.

**I. We ought to mind this Warning, Because Grieving the Spirit will ‘Injure our Knowledge’.**

—Of ourselves, we have no knowledge of the way to heaven, and never could tell how to get there. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can give us this knowledge. But if we grieve the Spirit, we shall never get this knowledge.

Suppose that you and I were travelling through a strange country like Switzerland. We should have no knowledge of the right way to travel in, so as to get safely through the country. And this would make it necessary for us to have a guide to show us the way. I remember when the Rev. Dr. Cooper and myself were travelling through Switzerland, some years ago, an incident occurred which may come in as a good illustration of this part of our subject. We were stopping at an inn in the beautiful valley of Interlaken, and had made arrangements, one evening, to go on foot the next day over a high mountain called ‘the Wengern Alp,’ to the valley of Lauterbrunnen on the other side. We had engaged a guide to show us the way, and were

to make an early start the next morning. There was an English traveller staying at the same inn with us. He was travelling alone, and wanted to make the same journey. He spoke to one of the guides about going with him. But he thought the man asked too much money. They could not agree about the price; so he refused to take the guide, and said he was sure he could find the way himself. He started all by himself the next morning, a good while before us. When we had got nearly half-way over the mountain our guide stopped. He pointed to a dark-looking little object, far off from the path in which we were walking, and said:—

‘There’s the gentleman who would not have a guide. He has lost his way. He never can get out of the mountains in that direction. If he doesn’t come back he’ll lose his life.’ Then the guide climbed up on a high piece of ground, and putting his hands to his mouth, he called out as loudly as he could, ‘Come back! come back!’ We could not tell whether the lost man heard him or not, or what became of him. But in refusing to take a guide to show him the way that man was injuring his knowledge, just as we do when we grieve the Holy Spirit.

**II. The Second Reason why we ought to mind this Warning, is Because Grieving the Spirit will ‘Injure our Happiness’.**—When David was speaking of the happy effect which follows from our acquaintance with the truth of God, he said—‘Blessed are the people which know the joyful sound’. This blessedness refers to the happiness which God’s people find from knowing Him. And here we see how the knowledge of God, and the happiness which springs from it, both go together. This knowledge is like a fountain; and this happiness is like the stream which flows from the fountain. But we cannot have the stream unless we have the fountain too. And so we see that if grieving the Spirit interferes with our knowledge of God, it must, in just the same way, interfere with the happiness which springs from that knowledge.

This story is told by an English clergyman, who lived in St. Petersburg a number of years, having the charge of an English chapel there.

‘We had several Russian servants,’ he says, ‘among whom was a bright, intelligent young woman, whose name was Erena. She came to us in the fall of the year, and everything went on well till the beginning of Lent in the spring of the following year. Erena was a member of the Greek Church. The persons belonging to this Church are very particular in keeping the fast of Lent, and attend the services of this season as diligently as though their salvation depended on it. Erena told her mistress that she wished to attend Church twice every day all through Lent. Her mistress told her that she ought not to think of going so often.

“Do you wish me to lose my soul, ma’am?” asked the girl. “No,” was the answer, “far from it; I wish your soul to be saved. But fasting, and saying prayers, and going to church will not save your soul.

There must be something more than all this. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of sinners, and it is *by faith in Him alone* that any can be saved.”

“Ah,” said Erena, “that is your religion; but I have been taught differently, and I must follow my own religion.”

Erena’s mistress had taught her to read, and had given her a Russian Testament.

‘One Sunday, when we were going to chapel,’ says this good minister, ‘my wife left Erena in charge of the children. Before leaving, she asked Erena to please read the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles while we were away. This excited her curiosity. She wondered what there could be in that chapter which made her mistress so anxious for her to read it. She began to read it at once, and got very much interested in the account given there of Cornelius the centurion. When she read about his fasting, and praying, and giving alms, she was very much interested, and said: “Ah! this is delightful! This man was of my religion. He believed in fasting, praying, and giving alms.” But when she found that an angel was sent to him, to show him how he could get to “hear words whereby he might be saved,” she could not understand what this meant. As soon as we returned from church, she came to my wife with great earnestness, and said, “Please, ma’am, will you explain this to me? I can’t understand it. Here is a good man, who kept the fast, and prayed to God, and gave alms; but that was not enough. Now, why was it not enough? I never was taught to do anything more.”

“Well, Erena,” said her mistress, “just read the chapter carefully through, and you will find out why the angel was sent to Cornelius.”

‘Then she went to her room, and read carefully on till she came to that beautiful verse, where Peter says of Christ, “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name, *whosoever believeth in Him* shall receive remission of sins”. This was enough. For the first time in her life, she clearly saw how we are to be saved through Jesus. She had found out the way to heaven. Running to her mistress, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed:—

“Oh, ma’am! I see it now—I see it now—I see it now! It was not by fasting that Cornelius the centurion was to be saved; it was not by saying prayers—it was not by giving alms—but it was by believing on *Jesus the Son of God*. I never saw it before, but I see it now.”

That Russian servant had found out the way to heaven. She began to walk in it at once, and it made her happy. But if she had refused to read the Testament that her mistress gave her, she would have been grieving the Spirit. That would have injured both her knowledge and her happiness.

**III. The Third Reason why we should mind this Warning, is Because Grieving the Spirit will ‘Injure our Usefulness’.**—If you are an errand boy in a store, and your duty is to carry parcels or messages wherever you are sent, then if anything should make

you lame, so that you could not walk, *this* would interfere with your usefulness. Suppose you have a position on one of the stations of the Pennsylvania Railway. Your duty there is to watch the signals which tell when a train is coming; and then to give notice of it by ringing a bell. And suppose that something should happen to your eyes, so that you could not see; this would at once injure your usefulness, and unfit you for the duties of your position.

Or suppose that your mother is a very skillful seamstress, and is supporting her family by the diligent use of her needle. She has an attack of rheumatism which settles on her right hand, making her fingers so stiff that she cannot use her needle. That would injure her usefulness.

If we listen to the voice of the Spirit when He speaks to us, and mind what He says, then He will show us what our duty is, and help us to do it. And that will make us useful. But if we grieve the Spirit by not listening to His voice, then we shall never know what our duty is, and we should have no power to do it, even if we did know.

**IV. The Fourth Reason why we should mind this Warning, is Because Grieving the Spirit will 'Cause the Loss of our Souls.'**—Just see what it says in the other part of the verse in which our text is found, 'Grieve not the holy Spirit of God—whereby ye are sealed, unto the day of redemption.' To seal the soul unto the day of redemption is to make its salvation sure. This is what the Spirit will do for those who listen to His voice. But if we grieve the Spirit, by refusing to listen to His voice, He will stop speaking to us and leave us to ourselves, and then our souls will certainly be lost.

See, there is Noah's ark just finished. God told Noah and all his family to come into the ark. They listened to His voice. They all went into the ark; and when the flood came, they were saved. But suppose now they had not minded what God said to them and had refused to go into the ark, that would have been like grieving the Spirit; and the result would have been that when the flood came, they would all have been destroyed. And so if we go on grieving the Spirit, it must certainly result in the loss of our souls.

This story is told by a faithful minister of the Gospel, as connected with his own experience while in college.

'We had,' said he, 'a remarkable revival of religion, one winter, during my college course. A large number of the students in my class became Christians and joined the church while that revival was going on. There was one young man in our class, who was an unusually bright student. His manners were very pleasing, and he was a great favourite with all the students. He attended the revival meetings for several weeks, and was under great exercise of mind. I was very anxious for his conversion, as I felt sure that he would make an uncommonly useful Christian. I prayed for him continually, and had many earnest conversations with him on the subject. But there

seemed to be some difficulty in his way, and I felt very anxious about him. One evening he came to my room, and in the course of our conversation he said to me—"I am very much obliged to you, my friend, for the warm interest you have taken in my case during this revival. I have come to tell you that the question is settled at last, but in a different way from what you have expected. I have made up my mind not to become a Christian now. You see I have always intended, when I get through college, to enter into political life. But I feel sure that I never should succeed as a politician if I were an earnest Christian. So I have concluded to make politics my choice, and let religion go."

'I was greatly distressed,' said the good minister, 'when I heard this. With the tears streaming down my face, I pleaded most earnestly with him not to take this course. But all that I could say had no effect on him. He had made his choice, and was resolved to stand by it.

'When his college course was finished, he entered into political life. He was successful in his efforts. He won great honour as a politician. But what was the end of it? He finally became intemperate and went down at last to a drunkard's grave. And we know that God has said, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Now that young man was grieving the Holy Spirit of God, when he made up his mind not to be a Christian, at the time of that revival in his college life. He did not mind the warning of our text, and the end of it was—the loss of his soul.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings; Addresses to Children*, p. 186.

#### GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT!

'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'—EPHESIANS IV. 30.

I WANT my hearer to think with me upon a very important subject, about *The Holy Spirit!* And I want you to do so, because I do not think most persons think much about the Holy Spirit. We think more about God the Father, and Jesus Christ, than we think about the Holy Ghost—don't we? That ought not to be. We ought to think about the Holy Ghost as much as we think about God the Father, or about Jesus Christ. But I do not think we do. I will tell you why we ought to do so.

Do you know *who* the Holy Ghost is? He is *God*. Now I will tell you a wonderful thing—He is *God in you*. The Bible says so, He is *God in you*, 'unless you are reprobate'. And I think, and I feel pretty sure, that the Holy Ghost is now in *all* of us. When you have a nice religious thought, He is in you. He gave you that nice thought. When you do something wrong, and are sorry for it, it is the Holy Ghost who gives you that feeling. And when you feel very happy, and believe that God loves you, and you think you are going to heaven, it is the Holy Ghost who gives you that thought. When you have been in sorrow, and are comforted, it is the Holy Ghost who



comforts you. Everything that is really good in us is because the Holy Ghost is in us.

I. That is a very wonderful thought—that the Holy Spirit is *God*, and is *in us*. And therefore I have thought that we ought to think a great deal about it. You won't understand my sermon without the Holy Ghost; but if you have the Holy Ghost you will. You won't know the real meaning of the Bible without the Holy Ghost; but if you pray to the Holy Ghost, and read the Bible, you will then see some wonderful things in it; things you have not seen before, the Holy Ghost will show you. Therefore let us speak about the Holy Ghost.

Do you know that I find in the verse that I have read to you a proof that the Holy Ghost loves you? Do you see that? Look at the verse. What is there, in the words, to prove that the Holy Ghost loves you? It says, '*Grieve not the Holy Spirit*'. Now if He is grieved about anything in us, it is because He loves us. I should not be 'grieved' about any of you that did wrong unless I loved you. It is a proof that the Holy Ghost loves you because He can be 'grieved' when you do wrong. A father or mother is 'grieved' when a child does anything wrong; but a stranger is not 'grieved'. He is shocked; he is angry; but he is not 'grieved'. But the Holy Ghost can be *grieved*. That shows to us how He loves us. Now *do not grieve One who loves you so much!* Somebody has said this: 'Christ is the head of the Church, but the Holy Ghost is the heart of the Church,' because he is so full of love. He is like the *heart*. 'Christ is the head, the Holy Ghost is the heart of the Church.'

Now I will tell you what sort of things are those that 'grieve' Him.

II. The Holy Ghost is *in you*. The Holy Ghost is in your conscience. Your conscience; that little voice inside which tells you when you do wrong, and when you do right. That is conscience, and the Holy Ghost speaks to us by the conscience. Whenever, therefore, you do anything that is against your conscience, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost, this kind, good God that is in you. If you say anything that is not quite true—and you know that it is not quite true—you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost, God the Holy Ghost! If you are unkind to anybody, if you are unkind to any animal, if you are unkind to anything, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you are disobedient, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you are idle, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you do not say your prayers—if you say your prayers without thinking what you are doing—you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you do anything that is wrong, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you do behind anybody's back what you would not do before their face, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost! If you neglect your duty, you 'grieve' the Holy Ghost.

That is '*grieving the Holy Ghost*'. Perhaps we do not think enough when we do anything wrong how that affects God. Do you know that when you do a wrong thing, when you do a sin, *that sin is the nail*

*that fastened Jesus Christ to His cross!* A lie—a dishonest action—anything wicked—pride, is a nail that fastened Jesus Christ on His cross. That is a fearful thing to think about. Do you think you have nailed Jesus Christ to the cross? Yes, yes, you have! When you do anything that you know is wrong, or leave undone anything you ought to have done, you are grieving God; you are trampling upon God.

There was a great Roman general. He commanded the Roman army when his country was invaded. The Roman army was conquered, and the Roman soldiers were flying away. As they did so they had to pass through a narrow passage, where only one man could go through at a time. What do you think the general officer did? He laid himself down in that narrow passage, so that as each man came flying back he would have to trample on his general! They could not fly from the enemy without trampling on their officer. So when they wanted to fly away, and came to the narrow passage, they could not bear to trample on their general; therefore they turned back again to fight with the enemy. That was the way the general prevented the soldiers from flying away.

When you do what is wrong you trample upon your conscience, upon your Saviour, upon the Holy Ghost, upon God! That is very awful, but it is true. *You trample upon God!*

Let me tell you of one or two persons, to show you about 'grieving the Holy Spirit'.

In the fourth century there was a very good and great man, who was called 'St. John Chrysostom'. Chrysostom was not his real name. It is a Greek word which means, 'The golden-mouthed'. He was called 'Chrysostom' because he used to speak nice, beautiful words. He was a very holy man; but the emperor was very much offended with him because of something he had said. He had spoken the truth. The emperor was very much offended, and he considered what he should do to punish him. So he consulted his counsellors. And he said to some of his great men, near his throne, 'What shall we do to punish Chrysostom?' And one man said, 'Banish him out of the kingdom. Send him to the other end of the earth.' Another man said, 'Take away all his money. Everything he has got.' Another man said, 'Put him in prison. Chain him up.' Another man said, 'Kill him outright. You are the emperor, and can do what you like.' Then another man spoke, he was a heathen man, and he said, 'All those men have given wrong advice. If you banish Chrysostom to any part of the world, it won't make any difference to him. He will preach about God anywhere. He won't bind himself not to do so. If you take away his money, you are only robbing the poor, for all his money goes to the poor. Therefore you are not robbing him. And if you chain him up in prison, he will kiss the chains, he will love the chains. And if you kill him, why, you will just open his door to heaven, be just doing what he would wish, opening the door for him to go straight into heaven. I will tell you what to do, there is only this one thing you can do

—*make him sin*, that will distress him. He will be *miserable* if you can make him do some sin.'

Oh, what a noble man Chrysostom must have been, that the only thing that could trouble him was *sin*, and the only way to punish him was to *make him sin!* They could only punish him by trying to make him sin.

That is about a great man; now I will tell you about a little boy. His father was a clergyman. This little boy had done something wrong; he had grieved his father; I could not tell you what it was, but his father was very much displeased with him. And the little boy went to his room to learn his lessons, to do his Latin and Greek. Just before the time came to take up his lessons to his father (he was being educated by him), the little boy came up to his father's room, and said, 'Papa, I cannot learn my lessons to-day, because I feel you are displeased with me; I can do nothing; I have been trying all this morning, and I cannot learn anything, because I know you are displeased with me'. His father said, 'Well, my boy, all I want you to do is to confess you have done wrong, and feel it. Now that you have confessed, and feel it, I am no longer displeased.' The boy said, 'Will you give me a token that you will forgive me? will you kiss me?' 'Yes,' said his father; and he kissed him. The little boy kissed his father, and all was made up. Then he said, 'Now I can read Latin and Greek with anybody, I am so happy'. As he was leaving the room, his father said, 'Stop, my boy. Is not there somebody else you have grieved?' Ought not you to have asked God to forgive you?' The little boy said, 'Papa, I did that first, before I came into the room to you. I knew I had grieved God, and before I asked you to forgive me I had asked God to forgive me; and I feel sure that He has, and now I am quite happy.' And the father writes (in the book in which he describes this circumstance), 'I don't think I ever had cause to reprove that boy again'. I wish you could all act as did this little boy.

III. But do not think it enough *not* to grieve Him, try to do something to please Him; to please this God in you, this Holy Ghost in you. How can you please Him? If you try, I am sure God will show you, Conquer some bad habit; be kind to somebody who has been unkind to you; do some duty to *please Him*; and what will be the consequence? There will be a little bird that will sing very sweetly in your bosom! You see if there is not. A sweet little bird in your bosom; and he will sing sweetly; you will hear such sweet notes! The Holy Ghost will always show when He is pleased. You will have happy thoughts; you will be able to pray in a different way; when you open your Bible, you will read it quite like a different book, you will feel it so much. You will feel so happy. You will get the 'seal' in everything. You will be so much happier. Everything will be beautiful—because the Holy Ghost is pleased. You will get over your lessons; you will have nice friends; you will be useful; because the

Holy Ghost is pleased. Try to do something for His sake, and see if the Holy Ghost does not show you that He is pleased.

IV. And one thing more I will tell you, if you please the Holy Ghost, the '*seals*' will not be broken. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby *ye are sealed* unto the day of redemption.' Let me try to explain that, *being 'sealed' by the Holy Ghost*.

I am going to suppose something. I will suppose you have got a great many very valuable jewels; you have got diamonds, and rubies, and pearls, and all kinds of beautiful jewels; and you are going abroad. You are going to leave England, and going into a foreign country. You do not like to take your jewels with you. What can you do to keep them quite safe? You had better lock them up. But that won't make them quite safe; you had better put a '*seal*' upon the lock; then you can go abroad and leave your jewels safely 'sealed'. When you come back, if you find that the 'seal' has been broken, you will be pretty sure that the jewels are gone; but if the 'seal' is all right, the jewels are safe.

Now you are Christ's jewels. He bought you at an immense price. You are Christ's jewels; and He has gone abroad, gone to another country for a while; but He will come back again. He has gone many miles away. But that you may be quite safe in His absence, He has put you under a 'seal'; that 'seal' is the Holy Ghost. You were 'sealed' by the Holy Ghost at your baptism; you were 'sealed' to keep you safe. And if you do not break that 'seal,' you will be quite safe. You break it when you commit a sin; when you grieve the Holy Ghost. Christ has put you under the Holy Ghost to 'seal' you. And if you honour the Holy Ghost, obey Him, please Him, then that 'seal' is not broken. Then, when the Proprietor returns, the Saviour Jesus Christ, as He will, He will find His jewels safe, because the 'seal' is not broken. If the 'seal' is broken, you will be lost! So take care! Remember you are Christ's jewels, which He loves, which He bought with His blood. Then, having the 'seal' put upon you, at your baptism, if you do not break that 'seal,' if you see that no man robs you of that 'seal,' you will be safe. *Keep the seal!* Then when Christ comes, shall I tell you what He will give you? 'The white stone with the new name written thereon.' And those who have 'the white stone with the new name written thereon,' are they who have kept the 'seal'—who are 'sealed'; and that 'white stone with the new name' is the *ticket to heaven*. This ticket everybody will have to present at the gate of heaven as they go in. The 'white stone' is pardon. It is taken from an old Greek custom, where the 'white stone' was the token of pardon. 'The white stone' means that you are forgiven; and the 'new name' means the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you can show at the last that you have been pardoned, and that you are belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ—that you have got 'the white stone,' *pardon*, and 'the new name,' *Jesus*, put upon your heart, you are safe for heaven. It is

a ticket for heaven. The angels will admit you; and you will go straight to heaven. The angels will admit you; for the seal is the white stone of pardon—eternal life! Take care, *do not grieve the Holy Ghost*. Think how much depends upon it. He loves you! Do not 'grieve' Him! *do not 'grieve' Him!*—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### OUR TRUEST RICHES

#### 'Use Time Wisely'

'Redeeming the time.'—EPHESIANS V. 16.

THE words of this motto stand high up in a tower above one of the busiest streets of a great northern city. Underneath them is the dial of an uncommon clock. There are two circles alongside one another. In the first of these, in clear figures, is displayed the hour. In the other are the figures that denote each minute. And as one watches it, the one, two, three, four, etc., succeed each other in regular succession. The first time I saw it, the thought occurred to my mind very forcibly how long a minute is. I was surprised to find how far I could walk along the street between the appearance of one of these figures and the next. It was a very noteworthy manner of impressing on one's mind how frequently we waste our time. Perhaps you have all been impressed with it on certain occasions. You may have stood with a watch in your hand trying to time a race, or to see how long elapsed between a flash of lightning and the subsequent peal of thunder. It may have seemed to you then as if even seconds were long, and when we read in certain sciences about seconds being divided up into millionth parts, our brain becomes dizzy at the thought of the enormous length of time. But the more common idea is of time's shortness. I suppose this becomes more and more noticeable the older we get. When we are quite little the hours seem long, and a summer day is like a week. But even children, when they are happy, think that time flies too quickly. There is one phrase people use sometimes which always appears to me one of the worst, and, if they really meant it, most sinful phrases one could use. They speak about 'killing time' as if time were some

enemy, some evil beast that had to be slain, and these are generally the people who have least to do, and who make the worst possible use of the time at their disposal. As a matter of fact, time is one of God's most precious gifts, and like His other gifts of highest value it is common to every one. Time is the same everywhere, and we have all the same length of day, hour, and minute; wherever there may be inequality, there is perfect fairness and adequate opportunity here, and it altogether depends upon the way in which we use our time as to how we are going to manage our life. Time is far too sacred a gift to abuse it.

I know one great castle in the south of England, and on its entrance tower there are two sundials, and the one that faces the approach has upon it the one Latin word, 'Prætreunt,' meaning, 'They have passed by,' and refers to the hours that the dial has measured. Then, as one comes up to the flight of stairs that lead to the hall, the other dial upon the right hand bears the word 'Imputantur,' 'They are reckoned up,' thus reminding every one who enters that the hours one has lived have their chronicle with God. It is a solemn lesson to be taught so forcibly, and impresses at any rate the casual visitor. One wonders whether it becomes so familiar to those who live within the roof of the castle that they do not even notice the words as they go out and in at the door. It is possible to become so familiar with danger that men forget it altogether, and we may become so familiar with truths like this that they do not impress us. I dare say we have all done our best to save our money, in order to get something we desired very much. How many times we have counted it, how often we tried to discover by the very process of counting that we had a shilling more than the sum we knew very well was the correct one. Yet time is of infinitely more value than all the money we can ever get. Some men are so rich that we read about their being worth so many pounds a minute; but in reality every one's minutes are worth far more than can be reckoned in the terms of earthly currency. In reality our time is not ours at all, but God's. He gives it to us, and it is a trust we hold for Him.—G. CURRIE MARTIN, *Great Mottoes with Great Lessons*, p. 49.



# THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

## THE APOSTLE PAUL, THE MODEL OF EARNESTNESS

'I press toward the mark.'—PHILIPPIANS III. 14.

PAUL, the Apostle, spoke the above words. He was a very remarkable man. Of all the persons spoken of in the Bible, next to our blessed Lord Himself, there is not one who has done so much good in the world as St. Paul. And I suppose that the chief thing that helped to make him so useful was the *earnestness* which marked his character. And, in putting him among our *Bible Models*, we cannot do better than to consider him as *the model of earnestness*.

This feature of character belonged to him by nature. Before he became a Christian, he was earnest in getting an education. He left his home at Tarsus, in Asia Minor, for this purpose, and was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of that age. None but an earnest young man would have done this.

And then we see how earnest he was in persecuting the followers of Jesus, when he thought *that* was the right thing for him to do. He got letters from the chief priests, and then travelled all the way from Jerusalem to Damascus—a very long journey in those days—that he might make prisoners of the Christians there, and bring them bound to Jerusalem. But it is chiefly in St. Paul's character, after he became a Christian, that we find his earnestness exhibited. And there are three things about the Christian life of St. Paul, in which his earnestness appears. These are—the *beginning*; the *continuance*; and the *results* of that life.

I. St. Paul showed his Earnestness in the way in which he 'Began' his Christian Life.—We see what that beginning was in the prayer which he offered, when Jesus appeared to him on his way to Damascus. He found that he was utterly wrong in the course of life he was pursuing. He saw that it would be necessary for him to make an entire change. He knew not what to do. So he offered the prayer: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' This showed that he was ready to begin his Christian life by doing whatever God wanted him to do.

II. But Secondly, we see what a Model of Earnestness St. Paul was in the Way in which he 'Continued' his Christian Life after it was begun.—We see this illustrated in the words of our text, in which he says: 'I press toward the mark'. In the use of this language, St. Paul has reference to the public games which were practised in his days.

One of these was the game of racing. A long race-

course was prepared in one of the public squares of the great cities. At the end of this racecourse, the laurel crown to be given to the victor was hung on the top of a high pole, so that all the racers could keep it in sight. The men who were going to join in the race would put off their unnecessary clothing, and with their loins girded would stand all ready to start as soon as the signal was given. The moment they heard the signal—they would be off. Each one would keep that crown in view, while, forgetting everything else, he would strain every nerve as he 'pressed toward the mark,' in the earnest endeavour to win the prize.

And when St. Paul said, 'I press toward the mark,' he meant to say that he compared his Christian life to a race. The mark, or prize, at the end of this race, which he kept in view and towards which he was pressing all the time, was the crown of life and glory which Jesus has promised to give to all His faithful followers. This was what he meant when he said—'I press toward the mark'. And in doing this he showed the earnestness with which he was *continuing* the Christian life which he had begun.

We see the earnestness of St. Paul in the way in which he preached; and in the way in which he worked.

In a little town in Germany lived a poor widow. Her husband had died leaving her nothing but the care of her three young sons. She found it very hard to support herself and them, yet she managed to do so sparingly, but honestly. The two elder sons at last were old enough to leave home, and do something for their support; but the youngest remained with his mother still, and went daily to school.

Then the war broke out, and there was a time of great trouble and distress. Collections were made all over the country for thousands of the poor wounded soldiers, and the cry for help reached even to the little town where this poor widow lived. The list of contributors to this work of mercy was carried from house to house. One day the collectors called at this poor widow's house. She had given her little mite to them, and they were going away, when her little boy took up a pen and quietly wrote down his name on the list for three dollars; and then counted out the money into the hand of the astonished collector. This was more than many of the people in the town who were quite well off had contributed. And where did this money come from? For several years this little fellow had been longing to own a watch; and every time that his mother or one of his elder brothers would give him a small piece of money, he would put

it carefully away. When he got enough pennies he would change them into a silver piece, and great was his joy when his money had increased so much that he had his first whole dollar. But now at last, it had increased to three dollars; and very soon he was expecting to have the great pleasure to which he had been looking forward so long—the pleasure of feeling that he had *his own watch in his pocket*. But he gave up this long-expected pleasure and readily parted with all his money, in the earnestness of his desire to help the poor wounded soldiers.

This was real noble in that boy. It showed that he had just the same spirit which St. Paul had, when he was such an example of earnestness in his Christian life. It was this earnestness of spirit which led the great Apostle of the Gentiles to continue his Christian life, in the same way in which he had begun it.

**III. But in the Third Place, we see what a Model of Earnestness St. Paul was, when we Look at the Results which 'Followed' from his Christian Life.**—We see one of the results of St. Paul's earnest life, in his *labours* for the cause of Christ. His missionary journeys took him to the utmost ends of the world, as it was then known—east, and west, and north, and south. Probably no man ever preached the Gospel to such multitudes of people as St. Paul did. If we only knew how many thousands and hundreds of thousands of persons there were, who had heard the Gospel from him, how surprising it would be! And if we could have an account of the multitudes of people who were converted by his preaching; and then of the multitudes who were converted *by them*, and so on, all the way down, from that day to this, we should no doubt find numbers of Christians labouring in the Church to-day, as the direct result of his labours, before he went to heaven eighteen hundred years ago. While he was still alive St. Paul said that the Gospel 'had been preached to *every creature under heaven*,' and this was mainly the result of his labours. And when we think of all this, we may well say that he was indeed a model of earnestness, in view of the results which followed from his labours.

But we see the result of St. Paul's earnestness in his *writings*, as well as in his labours.

There are twenty-one Epistles in the New Testament. Of these St. Paul wrote *fourteen*, or two-thirds of the whole. These Epistles are filled with the precious truths of the Gospel. Ever since St. Paul wrote them ministers of the Gospel have been taking texts from these Epistles, and preaching sermons from them. And through these sermons multitudes of souls have been converted; those in ignorance have been instructed; those in trouble have been comforted; those who were doubting have been encouraged, and an amount of good has been done which will never be known till that great day of judgment shall come, when all that is now secret shall be made known.

And so, when we think of the results of St. Paul's Christian life, both in his *labours* and in his *writings*, we may well speak of him as a model of earnestness.

*A missionary's earnestness and what it led to.*—One hot day in July, 1839, Dr. Hamlin of the American Mission at Constantinople, and so long at the head of Robert's College in that city, while passing by the Custom House, saw a crowd of people gathered there. Forcing his way through it, he found a poor sailor lying by the side of the wall apparently dying of cholera. 'Do you speak English?' asked Dr. Hamlin. 'Yes,' said the man, following the word with an oath.

'Are you an Englishman, or an American?'

'American,' he replied with another oath.

Still more terrible curses showed that profanity had become his mother-tongue.

Dr. Hamlin secured assistance, and had him removed to the home of one of the missionaries.

For several weeks he was kindly nursed, and taken care of by the missionaries. Then he recovered. One morning he called on Dr. Hamlin to say good-bye, as he was about to sail for Boston. Lingering for a moment at the door, he said, with great feeling:—

'I never shall forget your kindness to me, Dr. Hamlin. I have been a very wicked man, and have done all the evil in the world I could. But now, by the help of God, I am going to turn round and try to do all the good I can. God bless you! Good-bye.'

Three years afterwards Dr. Hamlin received a letter from him, which read thus:—

'DEAR DR. HAMLIN,—Thank God I still live. I am here workin', and blowin' the Gospel-trumpet on the Eri Kanal.'

When the Rev. Dr. Goodell, the missionary, saw this letter, he asked that he might begin the answer to it, and taking a sheet of paper, he wrote as follows:—

'DEAR MR. BROWN,—Blow away, brother! blow! Yours in blowing the same Gospel-trumpet—WILLIAM GOODELL.'

Twenty-five years after this Dr. Hamlin was dining one day at a hotel in the city of Paris, when an American gentleman came up to him, and said, 'Sir, I am just from Honolulu, in the Sandwich Islands. I knew a man there by the name of Brown, who is acting as missionary or Bible reader, and who has done a wonderful amount of good among the sailors. He can go anywhere, and everywhere, among them. He told me that he was once a wretched blaspheming sinner, dying in the streets of Constantinople, when you kindly took him to your home, and was the means of saving both his body and his soul. This seemed to me too strange to be true. Was it so?' asked the gentleman, 'or is it only a sailor's yarn?'

'It is a sailor's yarn, indeed,' said Dr. Hamlin, 'but it is a good yarn, and every word of it is true. And I am glad to know that in showing kindness to that poor blaspheming sinner, I was enlisting a trumpeter who not only sounded the Gospel-trumpet on what he called the "Eri Kanal," but is now doing the same from the Atlantic coast to the Golden Gate of California, and among the islands of the Pacific.'

This faithful missionary was imitating Paul's model of earnestness; and we see what great good resulted from his labours.—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Models*, p. 288.

### OUR TREASURY

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through [rather 'in'] Christ Jesus'—PHILIPPIANS IV. 7.

DEFOR has a story, 'Captain Jack'. Little boy, beggar, gets hold of lot of money. Quite happy before, then wretched, not know where to put it. Can't sleep because of it. At last finds hole in hollow tree—surely safe there; puts it in, and it drops down inside! Had a treasure, and wanted safe place for it. So now people with money put in bank. But even banks not always safe; sometimes man in charge not trustworthy. Steals money, or lets it get stolen. So besides *safe place* want also *sure keeper*. Text tells of a treasure we have, and a safe place to put it in, and a sure keeper to look after it. Think—

I. **Our Treasure.**—*Hearts and minds*—that which loves, and that which thinks. Very valuable (Prov. iv. 23, etc.). How often *love* wrong things and *think about* wrong things. [Balaam, Demas (2 Tim. iv. 10), and for 'the mind' (Ezek. xxxviii. 10, 11).] When we do, then put our treasure in bad places (cf. Matt. vi. 21).

II. **The Treasury.**—Safe place where we put treasure—text says 'in Christ Jesus'. How put hearts there? Get them to love Him, then can't love bad things. [Illustrate from Luke vii. 36-50. Poor woman had been putting treasure of her heart in bad places. Finds Jesus, puts it *there*. Does what she can to show her love for Him. See what He said (ver. 47).] So too with *minds*; think of Him, and can't well be thinking of bad things at same time (cf. Col. iii. 2; Phil. iv. 8).

But must *put* them there, just as *put* money in bank. [No use *keeping* money yourself and *saying*, 'What a safe place the bank is!'] How *put* them? [How put money in bank? Take it there and ask managers to take care of it.] So take hearts and minds to Jesus; ask Him to keep them. He never refuses to accept deposits, as banks sometimes do (John vi. 37).

III. **The Treasurer.**—Sure keeper wanted as well as safe place. So here, 'The peace of God'.

[Great deal of treasure in Bank of England. Every evening soldiers come tramping up Cheapside to look after it.]

The treasurer here not a band of soldiers, but *Peace*. [Cf. John xiv. 26, 27. Christ's legacy to His disciples 'Peace,' *His* 'Peace'; but this was one with the coming of 'The Comforter'. When Peace is said to 'keep the heart,' it is because the Holy Spirit is the Guardian.]

For us the treasury the most important matter. We have 'hearts and minds,' our treasure. Where are we putting them? They can't have a safe keeper unless put in right place. Pray, 'O Lord

Jesus, see to the keeping of my heart and mind'.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 161.

### A BRACELET AND RINGS OF GOLD

PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

If you turn to the fourth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, eighth verse, you will find six clauses, all beginning with *whatsoever*, and then a short clause at the very end of the verse, which is connected in sense with all the six. Any one of these would make a good text; but I think if there be any one of them sweeter than the rest, it is the fifth. I select it, therefore, as the text at present. It reads thus, with the words which complete the sense appended: 'Whatsoever things are lovely, think of these things'.

You know the meaning of *lovely* well, when the word is applied to things that are seen. If, for example, you were conducted into a garden, and some one were to cull you a pretty flower, and show you its neatly-shaped leaves, and its beautiful colours, and say, Is not that a lovely flower? you would quite understand the question. You feel as if you could love the sweet little flower. Or if you saw a little child in its mother's arms, healthy and happy, with a bright eye and a gay smile playing on its face as you spoke to it and fondled it, you would very naturally say, What a lovely babe! Your heart would be warming towards it. In reading the text, however, you see at once that it is another sort of loveliness than that which is seen with the eye, that is intended here. The lovely things to be minded, according to this exhortation, are things in the soul, things seen only in the actions they lead to—qualities of that invisible part of your nature which thinks and feels, is pleased or angry, happy or unhappy. There are lovely things in the mind. If I were to describe a boy who obeyed his parents, always spoke truth, never got into a passion, was obliging, polite, and kind to all, you would think him a lovely boy, whether I told you anything about his looks or not. Read the description given of the youthful Jesus, in Luke ii. 51, 52, and say if the picture presented is not lovely—worthy of your copying into your own lives, fitted to draw forth your love.

Let me now tell you of some lovely things in the mind and soul which you ought to seek after. I will give you five, and for memory's sake you may call them rings of gold, one for each finger of your hand. I shall then add a sixth, more valuable than all the rest, and to express its greater worth, you may call it a bracelet of jewels.

I. *The first gold ring* I would have you wear is **Sweet Temper.**—Swords have tempers according to which they are harder or softer, better or worse. And it is curious that the better the temper is, the sharper and more during the weapon is. But good tempers in souls are not sharp to cut. They are the very opposite. Every child knows what is meant by being cross, or short. If you cut a piece of wood



across the direction in which its fibres grow, and make a bit of plank, you would soon find how easily it would break. Now some tempers are like such a board—the least pressure makes them snap. There are some children with such tempers—they are so cross-grained, you can hardly please them; the least thing puts them out of humour, and they pout and get angry, and put on looks of gloom. Or perhaps they fret, and storm, and speak hot words of folly. You speak to them, and they answer as if you had struck them; and possibly, if engaged on some piece of work, they spoil it through spite. I have seen children in bad temper do very foolish things. I have seen them quarrel with their very food. How very unlovely these things are!

But if you knew a child gentle and meek, not easily made angry, always ready to be pleased, and anxious to please, speaking kindly to every one, and wearing a sweet smile for all, you would acknowledge the loveliness of such a disposition. And I am sure that it is a happier disposition, as well as a lovelier.

II. The *second* gold ring I wish you to put on is marked *Biddableness*.—You will easily understand the word, though I believe you will not find it in the dictionary. I wished a term stronger than obedience, meaning readiness to obey, and ventured to make this one.

Have you ever seen children who would not do what their father and mother bade them? I have. I have seen children that needed to be told a great many times to do a thing, when once should have been enough. I have seen them, even after that, go away very slowly, and do what was ordered in such a way as plainly said they did not like doing it. Others may be found that require to be reasoned with, or coaxed, or bribed by some promise, to obey a parent's command. Now there is something to be said to fathers and mothers about allowing this; but at present I am speaking to children, and I would say to them that such conduct is very unlovely indeed.

How lovely, on the other hand, is the sight of an obedient child. He not only does what father or mother bids, but he does it at once, and with a smile. He does it so as to show that the work is a pleasure to him. As he goes his merry step beats time to a music that is in his heart. With what delight the parents' look follows the willing little messenger! My heart warms to such a child when I see him. Put the gold ring on his finger. God Himself loves such a child, and approves his conduct. For this is His own 'commandment with promise,' 'Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth'. Again He says, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right'. Yet, of course, if parents should bid what God forbids, we owe it to our Heavenly Father rather to obey Him. And the child that can please his parents in all lawful things, but refuses, even to please them, to do what is wrong in God's sight, has already the spirit of a martyr.

III. But now I produce a *third* gold ring, worthy to adorn the middle finger of the hand. Engraved on it is *Unselfishness*.—There are children in whose eye the word Me is always prominent, and from whose lips it is always sounding. They wish and strive to get the best of everything to themselves, the best seat, the nicest portion of what is given to eat, the first opportunity to choose, the rarest toy, the prettiest gift. They are always looking after their own gratification. Now this is very unlovely, and manifests a disposition which, if left unchecked, will grow up to something very ugly indeed.

Put in contrast with such conduct the behaviour of an unselfish child. He has his happiness in seeing others happy. When there are gifts presented to be distributed among brothers and sisters, or playmates, he would have others choose first. He likes to see his companions get what pleases them. He would rather go without a thing himself than see others want. He yields a good place to another, happy to oblige. He looks to the comfort of others more than his own. In this spirit a little girl once, with a nice piece of cake just given from her mother's hand, seeing a poor child crawl to the door, ran with her dainty to cheer the little mendicant. How likely are such children to grow up useful and beloved!

I once read a story that touched me. Two boys, brothers, had gone to school on a winter's day. When the hour of dismissal came, snow had begun to fall. Amid the drifting storm the little fellows lost their way, and, instead of reaching home, had to seek shelter at last in a sort of cave or hollow, where they were protected from the blast. The elder was a brave, unselfish boy, and did his best to keep his younger brother cheerful. How he succeeded by and by appeared. For when his little companion complained of cold, he put off his own coat and wrapped him round with it. Friends were not long in making search for the wanderers; and when they found them the younger was fast asleep, and his brother was sitting watching him, cold without, but with a heart warm with love within; and the thanks of happy parents for his care of his little brother, was only less sweet than his own unselfish joy to have made his brother comfortable.

IV. A *fourth* ring of gold is marked *Tenderheartedness*.—You know what it is to be cruel. You recollect the fable of the frogs in the pool that were pelted with stones by mischievous boys. Those boys were doing a cruel thing in sport. Once as I came home along the streets at night, I found some boys torturing a rat, and when the poor creature seemed dead, one called out, 'Let it alone, let it come to itself a little, that we may get more fun'. I cannot bear to see unnecessary pain inflicted, even on a reptile. What are we that we should needlessly, or in sport, add one pang to the misery that is in the world? To take pleasure in witnessing battles between any of the lower animals is very hateful. Keep away from all sights of the kind. But men are very cruel often to one another. Joseph's brethren

showed themselves hard-hearted when, spite of his cries and tears, they sold him away to strangers and a foreign land. Slavery is a very cruel thing. The habitations of the heathen are full of cruelty. They have been doing awfully cruel things in Sicily of late years, which it was maddening to see the proofs of. Cruelty makes people very like devils, and the worst displays of it grew out of small beginnings. A bloody, brutal Roman emperor is said, when a boy, to have amused himself with tormenting slaves.

Children, cultivate a tender heart. Feel for the pains of others. Never inflict pain without reason. All that is called tender-heartedness is not good. A surgeon would not have a tender, but a weak heart, that would shrink from cutting off a limb to save life. A parent is cruel, not tender-hearted, that will rather indulge a child than deny it what is wrong, or refuse to chasten it, at the expense of leaving faults unattended. But it is beautiful to see in children a feeling, kindly heart, sympathising with sufferers, and never giving pain that can be helped. Their disposition is very lovely. The gold of their ring is very bright.

V. I shall just name one other. It is **Industry**.—The opposite of this is idleness, a very unlovely and a very unhappy thing. It is so even in children. I don't object to play. Active, healthful play is not idleness. And in its own place, and within due bounds, it is a right thing for children. Young children should have a great deal of play. God means them to have it, as He means that lambs should frisk, and run, and gambol. I like to see children playing, kindly, justly, lovingly. It is a lovely sight. Only, it must not be all play with them. And always more and more as they grow older, they should wish and strive to be of some use. They should be industrious at their lessons; they should be happy to run messages; they should accept happily duties at home to help their parents. Even where children must go to work sooner than is desirable, because their parents are poor, I would like them to think it is not all hardship. It is miserable to see little children put to tasks beyond their strength—the thing is cruel and wicked; but the mere necessity to work has some elements of comfort. It is safer to toil than beg. It is a very useful part of education. Work is always better than sloth. What I wish, however, to show by putting the ring, industry, on the finger, is the beauty of being useful, of doing something, of helping on the tasks of the world. The man that does not work in some way is a nuisance on the earth; and a child should learn when young to hate being a mere idler.

VI. But now I have in reserve a **jewelled bracelet**, worth all the rings many times over, and when worn along with them making them all look brighter. Bind it round your arm. Its name is **Grace**.—Grace is what God gives to make the heart good, or the effects of that gift. Here I use the word as meaning the effects on the character. These are very lovely, like sparkling diamonds.

A child that has grace fears God, loves Jesus, is afraid to sin, tries to do all things so as to please his Heavenly Father. There may be those other things I have mentioned as lovely without this; but this makes them all still lovelier. For then they all shine in a light from above. They are practised from regard to God's will. See that kind, sweet-tempered, generous boy, always obliging, always active, polite, obedient, amiable; what does he lack? Ah! he does not care for God, he does not think of God, he does not love the Saviour who loves him. How lovely he will become when the good Spirit touches his heart. He will be kinder, franker, truer, braver than ever for the sake of Jesus. He will have new motives then. He will study a new pattern. He will be like the Son of Mary, 'that lowly, lovely child'.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 38.

### BE TRUE!

'Whatever things are true.'—PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

Be true! be true! As I look back on the past, I hear these words ringing in my ears. Often and often through the years since I left Uppingham have they pulled me up when I was entering upon some line of action that was not strictly true. Often and often have these words saved me from some sin against God. Often have they enabled me to withstand some great temptation. 'Be true,' then, is to be my text for to-day. I go back to the circumstances under which the words were uttered. I see myself at the end of my last term, just about to leave the old school; I see myself looking back as I did at that time on misspent hours, on opportunities missed, on evil temptations unconquered, unresisted. Yes; I remembered all this as I went on my way to that last interview with my old headmaster, Edward Thring. And I must confess, too, to a feeling of awe and fear as I came to the schoolhouse at the appointed time. There was the old schoolhouse with its ivied walls, its grey-stoned windows, its well-known quad. There was the entrance where the fags used to ring the school bell for prayers. There was the housemaster's entrance, and through that door I must go ere many minutes should pass. And so as I rang at the bell, and heard its clang echoing through the house, I felt somewhat like one whose doom was sealed. The door opens and I am ushered into the presence of the headmaster. 'Sit down.' And then began a short talk on life, ending up with those never-to-be-forgotten words, '*Be true!*' Never shall I forget those words. When afterwards in my office at home, as a law student, they would often bring before me my duty in respect of the books which I was studying. When I was perhaps discouraged by many difficulties in my law-life, they would come to me as a message from God. They carried me through my examinations. They spurred me to further effort. They made me look to the highest standard as the one by which my life must be formed. And so I put these words before my hearers to-day; I put them before you in all

their simplicity of meaning, in all their depth of meaning. And I pray God to bless them to your souls this day as they have been blessed to mine. 'Whatsoever things are true.' How, then, are we to realise the text, 'Whatsoever things are true'?

I. First, then, it centralises our attention on *truth*: whatsoever is *true* in our endeavours to do right, in our struggles against temptation, in our anxiety to make good resolutions and keep them. We often in the first instance look to ourselves and strive in our own strength to battle against sin in its various forms. This is the experience of many, and it is an experience which leads to failure. It is centred on self, and is therefore no help to us, and so at the very outset we want to realise that if we are to attain to 'whatsoever things are true,' it can only be by the entire subjection of self, and the placing on the throne of our lives one guiding principle, *Truth*. How, then, shall we appropriate this truth? What is truth, the possession of which is of such vital importance to us? Let me refer you to St. John xiv. 6: 'Jesus saith, *I am the Truth*'; and here let us notice Jesus does not say, 'I am a part of the Truth,' but, 'I am the Truth,' the whole Truth; and so we begin to realise that if we wish to follow 'whatsoever things are true,' it can only be by having in our hearts *the Truth*, even *Jesus Christ*, who by His Spirit shall lead us into all truth.

II. While we think of 'whatsoever things are true,' and wish to follow them, there may arise instinctively in the minds of some of my hearers the thought of past sin. The past is a nightmare to some fellows. It is something to be avoided. It may even be that this past has, as it were, joined hands with the present, and that as you sit here listening to me you are conscious that you are not living truly and faithfully in God's sight. Are there any, I wonder, in this position here now? I feel there must be. What, then, has Christ, who is *the Truth*, to say to you?

The man who follows 'whatsoever things are true' is like the runner in a race. He doesn't want to be handicapped by the weight of former sins. He wants to be free. How is this to be attained? He sees the past with sins of thought, of word and deed. He realises that the fetters of sinful habits are still binding him, and he cannot run the race as he wishes. With what joy does he hail the message, 'If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. There is no one here who cannot enter into the reality of this message. 'God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live.' God willeth not that fellows at school should sin in thought, word, and deed against Him. No, rather does He proclaim forgiveness for the past, and strength for the future. We see, then, that the mere fact of former sin must not discourage us, but rather should it encourage us to cast our whole life upon God's greatness and love and mercy, and realise in doing so that we are forgiven, and that we are able in the truest sense to be His faithful followers. But there are still some more thoughts for us in regard to the text, 'Whatsoever things are true'. What has it meant to those of us who make an outward profession of Christianity, who call ourselves Christians? How far have we followed *the Truth* in our daily experience? Christianity is not meant for the Sunday alone, and yet there seem to be many who think so. You see men going to church on the Sunday, and then on the Monday giving way to all sorts of sinful habits. This is not Christianity; Christianity is nothing if it does not enter into every detail of our lives. Christianity is nothing if it does not leave our whole life by its presence.—NORMAN BENNET, *Be True: And Other Sermons for Boys*, p. 1.



# THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

## KEEPING THINGS IN ORDER

'Joying and beholding your order.'—COLOSSIANS II. 5.

THE church at Colosse kept things in order, and Paul, seeing it, was glad, just as I am glad when you keep things in order in your homes, in school, in church, and at your work. But how did Paul find out that the church to which he wrote these words, in the year of our Lord 62, kept things in order? for he was in prison at Rome for Christ's sake at the time. He heard of it through one of the members of that church who came to Rome to see him, named Epaphras, and who told him of their order and love. Hence Paul could write: 'For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ'. So I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order.

Let me say a few things about keeping things in order.

I. You like to scatter things about. When you play with your blocks or toys, or cut out paper dolls and dresses, you cover the floor or table with them. You take great delight in them. But after awhile you become tired of them, and leave them scattered about, and such a looking table or floor! Dolls, dresses, bits of paper, blocks, everything you were playing with scattered all about! You had a good time at your play, putting things out of order, and now comes a sore trial to most of you; for—

II. It is hard keeping things in order. You do not like to pick up your play-things, putting each in its place, as your mother wants you. How many of you keep things in order? How many of you leave it to your mothers to pick up after you? If I were to ask your mothers, what do you think they would say? There is no play in keeping things in order, you say; well, there is something better than play. So I am going to tell you how to do it.

III. Always have a place for everything. Have a place for your play-things, for your hat or cap, your coat or shawl, your books, your clothes, which you call your own. And put your clothes in order at night when you go to bed, your shoes side by side. That is the way the cadets or scholars at the military school at West Point have to do. That is the way you ought to do. You ought to have a place for everything, not a half dozen places for each. If you have not such a place, ask your mother to give you one: one for your play-things, one for your books, one for your clothes, one for your hats and caps. Then—

IV. Always put a thing in its place. When you

are done playing put everything away in its place, and pick up every bit of paper or litter and put it where it belongs. When you come in, hang your cap or hat in its place every time. Do not throw it down anywhere, but put it in its place; for that is the way to keep things in order. If you use any tool, as a hammer or hoe, do not leave it where you used it, but put it in its proper place. And so of everything you have or use. Do you ask me: 'Why take such pains to keep everything in its place?' I will tell you.

V. Because then you will know where to find it. If you leave things where you played with or used them, you will be all the time losing them. You will be ever asking, 'Mother, where is my hat?' 'Mother, where is my knife?' and so of everything. You forget where you left it, and you ask mother. But if you hang your hat where you should, and put everything in its place, you know where to find them. This is one reason why you should have a place for everything, and keep everything in its place.

Another reason is that if you do so, you, like the church in our text, will have such order that all will rejoice in it. If I were to look into your homes, after you have had a good play there, do you think I should rejoice in seeing your good order? Should I find that you had put everything away? Or should I find the floor all covered over with litter, waiting for your mother to clean up after you? Which should I find? The keeping of things in order is another reason why you should have a place for everything and should keep everything in its place.

But there is another reason that I will mention. As you do in childhood, so you will do when you become men and women. If you keep things in order as children, you will always keep things in order; but if you let everything lie scattered about where you happen to use them, you will never keep things in order all your days. You will have trouble all your life because you did not learn to be orderly in childhood. Hence your plays are of use in teaching order.—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons for Children*, p. 73.

## AIMING AT HIGH THINGS

'Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.'—COLOSSIANS III. 2.

If you should shoot an arrow at the ground, you would hit the ground, but no one would praise you for it. If, however, you should aim at a very small mark and should hit it, all would praise you for your skill. To shoot downwards and hit the great earth, anybody can do that; but to shoot upwards and hit

a small mark, very few can do it, for it takes a long time to learn to do it, and few have patience enough to get the skill to do it. It is said that Indians put their boys' dinners on limbs of trees, and the boys must shoot them down before they can have them. Thus they learn to shoot straight.

Paul told the church at Colossæ—and the children that were in it—to set their mind on the things that are above, where Christ is, and not on the things which are upon the earth, which is under our feet. He tells us to do the same. But to do it, we must aim at the high things, not at the low; we must set our mind on the best things, not on the mean; we must shoot at the stars, and not at the ground.

Our text tells you, boys and girls, to aim at high things, and to keep aiming at them until you hit them. You are to set your mind on them, to study how you may make the high things your own. Let us see how you may do this.

1. In the home there are high and low things, and you should set your mind on the best things there and strive for them until you win them. You should aim to be the very best boy or girl in the home, in good manners, in kind treatment of one another, in ready obedience to your parents, in tender love, in everything. If you fail now and then, try again, and still again until you succeed. Hit this high mark in the home: for if you are a good child at home, you will be a good man or woman, husband or wife.

2. There are high and low things in play, and you should mind the high and shun the low. You should be fair in play and never unfair, truthful and never untruthful, kind and never unkind, ready and never dull, skilful and never unskilful. Set your mind on being ready, skilful, kind, truthful, and honest in play, for these are the high things you should aim at.

3. There are high and low things in school. You can play in school, have poor lessons, and be a bad scholar; or you can study, get good lessons, be a good scholar, and behave as you ought. Now on which will you set your mind? Let me tell you. Get

every lesson perfectly. Make no failures. Behave the best you can. Make your conduct and scholarship perfect. Aim at the high things.

4. There are high and low things in learning a trade. Aim at the high. Do not slight any part of the trade. You may think it to be a trifle. Perfection comes from minding trifles. You want the highest skill in your trade, to be in it a skilled workman. Then put your mind into it. Slight nothing. Do everything in the quickest and best way. Aim at the highest.

5. There are high and low things in the store, in the office, on the farm, in every kind of honourable work. Do you think the work hard? Never mind that; but mind to do your best in it. Keep your mind on the work in hand. Master every little and every great thing in it. You cannot do anything well without care and attention.

6. Aim high in everything. Always try to do the best you can, in whatever circumstances God places you. The high and the low are in every calling, in everything we do. Set your mind on the best, and weary not until you win it.

7. But Paul looked above the things of earth, and said: 'Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.' God is in heaven. Christ is in heaven. We want to go to heaven when we die. Let us, therefore, mind the things of God, of Christ, of heaven. To do this we must study God's Word, the Bible; we must attend church; we must love, serve, and obey God; we must love one another; we must always do what is right and shun what is wrong; we must keep His commandments. You are not too young to do this. The youngest can love and obey Christ. God is love, and gave His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for your sins. He sends His Holy Spirit to lead you to Christ, that you may tell Him your sins and ask Him to forgive you.—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons for Children*, p. 21.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

## KNOCK AT MERCY'S DOOR

I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

'PRAY without ceasing' is a Divine precept, and constant need requires constant help. *Asking, Seeking, and Knocking* are three special features of real prayer. Asking is the simplicity of prayer, seeking is the earnestness of prayer, and knocking is the importunity of prayer. Prayer should be the key of the day, and the lock of the night. 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you,' is the promise of the Lord Jesus Himself. There are three *Knocks* all our tiny folks should avoid:—

The timid knock. Want of faith (James i. 6).

The runaway knock. Want of patience (Ps. xl. 1).

The late knock. Want of time (Luke xiii. 25).

There are five proper ways of knocking:—

I. **Knock Early.**—Whilst you are young (Ps. v. 3).

II. **Knock Earnestly.**—With all your heart (James v. 17, 18).

III. **Knock Distinctly.**—With simple words (Matt. vii. 7).

IV. **Knock Repeatedly.**—With importunity (I Thess. v. 17).

V. **Knock Expectantly.**—With patient waiting (Ps. xxvii. 14).

A little girl about four years of age being asked, 'Why do you pray to God?' replied, 'Because I know He hears me, and I love to pray to Him'. 'But how do you know He hears you?' was the further inquiry. Putting her little hand to her heart, she said, 'I know He does, because there is something here that tells me so'.—CHARLES EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 57.

## UNCEASING PRAYER

'Pray without ceasing.'—I THESSALONIANS V. 17.

WHAT! *always* praying? How can I? Dressing, eating, walking, etc., all this besides prayer? Yes; but they can all help us to pray. Little girl once found this out—*dressing*, she prayed for a better dress (Rev. vii. 9); *eating*, reminded her of other food (John vi. 32-34) [cf. the grace, 'We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,' etc.]; *walking*, spoke of another walk (Ps. cxix. 1). So, then, *one way of doing* what St. Paul tells us is—

I. **Let Everything we do Remind us of Something to be Prayed about.**—But other ways of praying besides words. [Man in a good service—wants his son to be taken on—knows that his master knows his wish—thinks, 'If I work well he will grant it'; so takes pains always to look neat—so please master

(praying with his dress). Works very hard and carefully (praying with his work), etc.] So with us—all our prayers may be put into *one* prayer, 'Thy will be done'. If really want that, can always be praying it: *In dress*, neat, careful, clean, because God's will (1 Cor. x. 31, 32). *In eating and drinking*, not greedy, but grateful. *In lessons*, doing best to learn. *At play*, 'rejoice evermore,' etc.; what St. Paul says to slaves (Col. iii. 23), true for us—may do everything 'heartily,' with our heart as well as hands, as to the Lord, because God wills. So another way of obeying the text is—

II. **Let Everything we do Say, 'Thy Will be Done.'**—One other thing. Come and look at a little prayer-meeting—up in a mountain (picture out from Ex. xvii. 8-16); prayer ceasing, success ceases—then others lift up his hands—so prays *without* ceasing.

So sometimes boy or girl wants something (help to conquer bad temper, or do some work); prays—no better (temper breaks out again, etc.). 'Oh, no use praying, just as bad as ever!' Ah! you must pray *without ceasing*—keep on—keep on. [Elijah (1 Kings xviii. 42-46) wanted rain—prays—boy goes to look—'nothing!' Again, and again, and again, and again—seven times—then at last (ver. 44). He prayed without ceasing. May cf. also Luke xviii. 6, 7.] How many prayers like runaway ring or knock! So then—

III. **Persevere—Keep on. Go on Praying till the Prayer is Answered.**—Three ways of obeying command in text. (Recapitulate 1, 2, 3.) Make it our text this week, and try to see whether we can't do what it tells us. Not so hard as it seems at first, and if we ask God, He will give His Holy Spirit to show us how to do it.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 121.

## ABOVE SUSPICION

'Abstain from all appearance of evil.'—I THESSALONIANS V. 22.

PROBABLY you have read these words many times; possibly you have filled the whole page of a copybook, line after line, for twenty lines or more, with this same sentence. Yet we will not discard it. To start with—anything that speaks of 'appearance' is at least speaking about something that is well understood to-day. There never was a time when appearance was so considered—not only in people, but in things. The very furniture in our houses—the mahogany furniture and the oak furniture—are only mahogany or oak in appearance. They are covered with a thin shaving of mahogany or oak, as the case



may be, and underneath there is a commoner wood ; so they are not what they appear to be. It is so with many people, unfortunately : they appear to be gentlemen, or learned, or good, or Christlike, but it is all an outward covering. There is no depth of character or learning or goodness in them. They only study appearances.

We have to learn from our text that just as there may be goodness in appearance, so there may be evil in appearance. Sometimes people are deceived by the appearance of goodness in a man, and for a time take him to be a good man ; they make him their friend, and they trust him, perhaps to their sorrow. On the other hand, we have to notice this important fact, that there may be the appearance of evil in a man, and others may take that man to be an evil man ; which is a very serious thing for him, and for the family to which he belongs, and for Jesus Christ if he professes to be a Christian. He is not actually evil,

but something he did, because he was not careful or thoughtful, had the appearance of evil, and sometimes the mere appearance of evil will work out the same unfortunate results as the evil itself.

We have to remember that it is not enough to have a conscience free from the sense of evil in God's sight, but we must also have a life free from the appearance of evil in man's sight.

The Chinese have a curious proverb ; it is, ' Don't tie up your shoe in a cucumber field '. It is another way of saying, ' Abstain from all appearance of evil '. If you were passing through a cucumber field, of course all the cucumber vines would be running along the ground, and on the vines there would be the cucumbers, and though you stooped down only to tie up your shoe, others might think that you had stooped down to steal.—JOHN EAMES, *Sermons to Boys and Girls*, p. 118.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

## THE VOICE WITHIN

'A good conscience.'—1 TIMOTHY I. 19 (with HEB. X. 22).

In an evil world like this we need all the help we can get to enable us first to find out the right way and then to walk in it. Some of us have had wise and loving fathers and mothers and other friends, who have done much for us in pointing out the way, guiding and encouraging us to walk in it, protecting us from dangers and keeping us from mistakes into which, but for them, we should certainly have fallen. And if we had them always at our side, we think we might manage in some way to get along. But we cannot have them always with us, and even if we had, there are things which they cannot see and in which they could not help us. We must judge for ourselves and act for ourselves. We soon enough get to be the men and women which so many young people wish and weary to be, and we must then do the best we can for ourselves. We have, indeed, the Word of God, the blessed Bible, to shed light upon our path. We can carry our difficulties to *it*, and put questions to *it*, such as no other can answer. And yet we cannot have the Bible always in our hands, and even though we had it all committed to memory, it would not altogether serve the purpose. We want something *nearer to us* than any *book*, or any *friend*—which we can carry about with us wherever we go—which there is no danger of our forgetting or leaving behind us. We want a light *within*. And we have such a light. Each of us has it. It is always there, whether we attend to it or not; and if we deal with it as we ought, it will generally guide us aright. You will find mention made of what I refer to in 1 Timothy i. 19, 'A good conscience'. You may also look at Hebrews x. 22, 'A evil conscience'.

I wish to say a few words to you now about *Conscience*. Some of you may not understand very well about the word, but you all know the thing. There are two great words with which we have to do every hour of our lives, and with which all our happiness and welfare are wrapped up—*Right* and *Wrong*. Conscience has to do with these, telling us about them, and telling us about ourselves in connection with them. There are three remarks under which I may arrange what I have to say about Conscience: *What it is—what it may be—what it leads to*.

**What it is.**—There are three characters in which we shall look at it.

1. *Conscience as a guide*—a guide as to what is *right* and what is *wrong*. When you are going to do a thing, it is as if a voice within said to you,

'That is right,' or 'That is wrong'; in the one case, adding, 'You may do it,' or 'You should do it,' and in the other, 'You must not do it'. It is just something like what you find in connection with certain things of a different kind. If you were going to step into deep water, if you were going to walk out at an open window, two or three stories from the ground—if you were going to put your hand into the fire or into a pail of boiling water—if you were going to drink a mixture from a phial that had 'poison' marked on it, it would be as if something within you said '*Don't!*'—as if something laid hold of you to keep you back. If anyone were to ask you, 'How did you *not* do it?' you would very likely say, 'Well, I can hardly tell you. It was just a kind of *instinct*. I *felt* I should not do it.' Now, in a somewhat similar way, we have got that within us which tells us we should not do certain things, not merely because they would hurt us, but because, however pleasant they might be at the moment, or however they might be thought to benefit us in some ways—they are *wrong*. You are tempted to do some forbidden thing, and though there is no human eye to see you and nobody may ever know of it, the voice within says, 'Don't; it is wrong!' You are tempted to take something which does not belong to you, but which you have very much desired to have—money, a pencil, or knife, or something of that kind, and the voice says, 'Don't; it is *wrong!*' You are tempted to say what is not true, in order to escape punishment for a fault, or to get some reward to which you have no right—to *copy* at school, to take advantage of a class-fellow, to do what is unfair at your play, to speak some word which you would be ashamed that your mother, or any friend whom you respect, should hear—to do some underhand or dishonourable thing which you have promised *not* to do, such as writing letters of an improper kind or reading books of a doubtful character; and the voice says, 'Don't; it is *wrong!*' You all know about this. It has happened to you a hundred times.

Now, what is it that thus speaks? It is *Conscience*. It is a kind of *instinct* or *sense* which God has implanted in your nature for your guidance, telling what would hurt your *soul*, just as the other things I spoke of would hurt your *body*. It has sometimes been spoken of as '*the voice of God in the soul*'. That is only true so far. It is not *always* right in what it says. There is such a thing as an *ignorant conscience*—an *unenlightened conscience*. Thus Paul's conscience led him to persecute the followers of Jesus—to hale them to prison and put them to death. He says, 'I verily thought

within myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth'. And other people have often done very wrong things, at the bidding of their conscience. And so conscience needs to be *instructed, taught, enlightened*. And if you ask me who is to teach conscience, I answer—*God*. The great instructor of conscience is the *Word of God*. It is with conscience as with a ship's compasses, by which the helmsman steers the vessel's course. In a general way these may be depended on; the needle points to the north with more or less of steadiness. But now and then there are slight deviations, and whenever the ship comes into port, her compasses have to be adjusted. So with conscience. We need to be constantly bringing it to the Word, to have it put right and kept right. Whenever it differs from the Word, conscience is *wrong*. Hence the need of making the Word our constant study, and seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we may understand it and apply it aright. The more this is done the more trustworthy will our conscience be. The more we have to do with God, and the more we study the character and life of Jesus, and keep up fellowship with Him, and have a desire to be like Him, the more likely will our conscience be to be a right and safe guide. It will then tell us truly about *sin and duty*, and be, as one has described it, *a reflection of God's will*.

Now, supposing you were in an unknown and dangerous region, where you were sure to miss your road, unless you had good guidance, where there were snares and pitfalls into which you might fall, where there were those who wished to lead you astray, and if possible to destroy you, how would you do with your guide? Would you not be asking him at every turn, 'Which is the right way? Where should I go? Will it be safe to take this road? Where does it lead to?' Would you not get him to go before you, and follow as close to him as possible, at very dangerous places, planting your feet in the very marks which he pointed out to you? Would you not say, 'I have the guide for the very purpose: otherwise, I might as well not have had him?' Would you ever think of trying to put out his eyes, or to blindfold him, to drug him, and get him to fall asleep, so as to unfit him for his work, or compel him to be silent? Would you be angry with him because he told you which was the right road, and showed you the danger of taking any other? Would you treat him with neglect and pay no attention to what he said, whenever his way differed from the way you wished to take? If you wished to get some beautiful flowers, or to catch a bright-coloured butterfly, or to rob a bird's nest on some dangerous cliff, would you disregard him, and evil entreat him, if he tried to save you from what might be death to you?

And yet is not that just what some of you do to your consciences? You pay no attention to them. They speak to you in vain. You will not follow their leading. You seek to silence them, to drown their voice, so that you might as well have *no conscience*

at all. None ever needed a guide more than you; none ever needed to listen more carefully to the guide's voice. And yet you put your fingers in your ears and will not hear. A friend told me of a young man who had been well brought up, but who became a Sabbath-breaker, and regardless of all that was good. He used to set out on the Sabbath mornings to walk in the fields and to bathe in a neighbouring river. Sometimes when he was at the river side, the church bell, which used to call him to the house of God, began to ring. He could not bear to hear it, and used to undress as fast as he could, plunge into the river, and keep his head under water as long as he was able to bear it, that he might not hear the sound that told him of his duty and of his sin. It was *conscience* that was speaking to him, but, foolish lad that he was, he would not hear. He would not follow the leading of his guide.

I have heard of a boy who was sent to a shop to buy a parcel of sugar. As he was on his way home, he was seen to come to a stand in the village street, look at the parcel that was under his arm, put his finger into his mouth and wet it, as if he were going to rub a little hole in the paper and just *taste* what was inside. And then, all of a sudden, as if some one had spoken to him, he withdrew his finger, put the parcel firmly under his arm, took to his heels, and never drew breath till he was home and had given the parcel into his mother's hands. What had happened? Who had spoken to him? It was *conscience*, acting as his guide, telling him he was about to do what was *wrong*. And he followed his guide and escaped the danger.

And so your safety lies in listening to conscience, whether it whisper gently or thunder terribly. Whatever it may cost you, let your resolution be, 'I must hear what my guide says. I must follow my guide.' Nothing could be more foolish or dangerous than to disregard it. It is as foolish and dangerous as for the engine-driver on an express train to disregard the danger-signals which tell that the road is impassable, or for the helmsman on board ship to pay no attention to the man on the look-out, when he tells that another ship lies across the vessel's course, or that the vessel is close upon the rocks.

2. *Conscience as a judge*.—It is more than a *guide*, however important that may be. It not only tells what is right and what is wrong, but it acts the part of a judge, and the instant a thing is done, it *tries* the doer of it, and approves or condemns him. There are some trials, in courts of justice, which are very long and tedious, and in which it is very difficult to get at the truth. The evidence is often contradictory. One witness says one thing, and another says another, so that the judge does not know what to do. Sometimes he acquits the guilty. Sometimes, when there is a want of proof, the verdict is 'not proven,' and the criminal escapes. Does it ever occur to you that a process of this kind is going on every day, in the case of each of you? Each of you may be said to carry about a court of justice in his own breast.



There is no need of witnesses. There is no need of a jury to sift the evidence. All that is wanted is a judge, to pronounce at once on each action, as soon as it is done, giving it its character, as good or bad, and passing sentence on him who did it.

How do you generally feel when you have done anything which you know to be wrong? Why do you look so sad? Why are you so unhappy? Why do you seem so absent, in some company in which you should have been full of spirit and glee? Why is there such a burden on your heart? Some one asks if you are ill; another asks if anyone has been annoying you. What is the matter? *Conscience has been judging you—condemning you.* Nobody saw the evil deed done. Nobody knew of it. No one accused you. No one said you had done wrong. You stood as a criminal at the bar of your own conscience—there was no denying the wrong done, and the judge condemned you. And how long did it take? It was all the work of a moment. And you left the bar *condemned—self-condemned.* That is what is the matter with you.

And where you have done right, conscience approves—it says, 'Well done!' and, next to God's approval, nothing in all the world is so much worth having as this—the approval of your own conscience. Others may condemn you and think or speak ill of you, but that matters little if your own conscience approves. But when it cries 'Shame!' it matters not though all the world should approve. No one can pass such a sentence upon you as that which you pass upon yourselves.

It is not difficult to account for the unhappiness of some people—their uneasiness, their unsettledness, the shifts to which they have recourse to drown thought. It is *conscience acting as judge.* God has appointed conscience in each of us for this very purpose—to do this very work—to act as His representative. We speak about 'the judgment' as *future*—as all to come. The truth is, the *judgment is going on now*—every day, all day long. We are *judging ourselves.* And when the great judgment-day shall come, the result will only need to be declared. Oh, take care how you treat this judge! how you deal with his sentences, how you behave after he has condemned you. I shall speak, by and by, of the way in which pardon and peace, in such a case, are to be found.

3. *Conscience as a recorder and remembrancer.*—In courts of law, when sentences are passed, they are recorded, and stand against the guilty person. It is the work of the clerk of court to see to this. Now, conscience does *this* also. *It remembers—it records—it brings to mind,* the evil we have done. It does not need to be written down on paper with pen and ink. It is written down the moment it is done, on the tablets of the heart, and laid past to be ready for after use. Who shall tell what a memory conscience has, how long and accurately and minutely it remembers, and how faithfully and fully it will bring all up again, perhaps thirty or forty or fifty years after, as if the

thing had happened yesterday? The fact that you have forgotten it meanwhile, does not matter in the least. It is all written down, ready to be recalled, whenever occasion arises. It is like documents written with a certain kind of ink. As soon as the ink is dry, the writing becomes invisible. When you look at it, you see nothing but a sheet of clean paper. But hold it before the fire, and in a moment it starts out, as if by magic, every letter of it distinct.

You recollect how it was with King Herod. He had beheaded John the Baptist, because he reproved him for his sin. And when Jesus appeared, a mighty prophet and worker of miracles, and every one wondered who this remarkable man could be, and some said one thing and some another, Herod, when he heard of Him, said, 'It is John the Baptist, whom I beheaded.' In a moment the picture of the murdered man started up before him. 'But how can it be he? Is he not dead and buried?' 'He is risen from the dead!' said the king. Others might have forgotten all about the evil deed, but Herod's conscience had kept the record.

You remember the story of the boy and the grapes—how he selfishly and greedily stole the grapes brought by a friend to a little invalid sister, as they lay on the table at her bedside. And there the matter seemed to begin and end. If there had been no conscience, it might have been so. But conscience had recorded it too faithfully to admit of that. The boy became a man. He was crossing the ocean, his vessel was wrecked, and he went down into the trough of the sea and gave himself up for lost. Wonderfully he came to the surface again and was saved. And what were his thoughts when he was so near the eternal world? The past all seemed to come anew before him, and that mean action of his boyhood—conscience held it up before him, and the voice within asked, 'Who stole sister's grapes?' He needed no remembrancer, no accuser but *himself.*

We are told of a jeweller travelling with his servant, carrying a large amount of property, in jewels and money, with him. At a lonely part of the road the servant drew a pistol from his master's saddle and shot him dead, threw his body, with a heavy stone fastened to it, into a neighbouring canal, and made off with his booty to a distant part of the country. There he began business in a small way, doing everything in such a manner as to furnish no trace of the terrible deed. He grew in wealth and in public esteem, entering into family life, and at length becoming chief magistrate of the place. No one knew of his guilt. Dead men tell no tales, and it seemed as if he should carry the secret to his grave. But a case comes up in which a servant is accused of having murdered his master. Witnesses are brought forward, the crime is proved, and it only remains that sentence of death should be pronounced. The man of whom I am speaking is president of the court. It falls to him to pass sentence upon the murderer, when to the amazement of the onlookers, he rises from his chair, comes down from the bench, takes his place beside the criminal at the bar, tells out the story of his own

crime, and demands that justice shall take its course. It just needed such an event to bring all to mind, to loosen the tongue of conscience, and leave the man no choice but to publish the secret to the world.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes you hear of *conscience-money*. The country is defrauded by some one who has not paid his fair share of the taxes levied by the Government. He has made a false return of his income, or he has smuggled some forbidden goods, or he has not paid the tax for his dog, or otherwise he has withheld what he knew to be due. Perhaps he thinks he has done a clever thing. But again and again it comes up. He thinks of it when he is alone. He dreams about it when he is asleep. It is an unjust and dishonourable thing, and it so haunts him that he can find no relief till he returns the ill-saved money. When you see acknowledgments of 'conscience-money' in the newspapers, that is what is meant.

Not long ago you might have seen, what I suppose is to be seen to-day, an unused postage-stamp in the crown of a gentleman's hat. A friend of mine who noticed it day after day, in a house in which he was staying, had his curiosity aroused, and at length asked what was the meaning of it, and was told that many years ago—twenty-five or thirty, I think he said—when the gentleman was in business, he gave one of his customers, who was paying an account, five shillings too much in the way of change. All these years passed away, and not long ago he received a letter mentioning the fact, and telling that on the occasion of Mr. Moody's visit to the city where he lived, the dishonest customer had been awakened and brought to Christ, conscience had brought up the remembrance of the wrong, and demanded of the new convert that restitution should be made. The sum due was enclosed in postage-stamps. All the stamps but one were used in the ordinary way, and that one was stuck in the crown of the hat, as a reminder of the power of conscience in a day of awakening. I might tell you of many such things within my own knowledge, where conscience has brought back the recollection of things long forgotten.

It may be easy enough just now to make light of the faults and sins of youth, turning them into an occasion of amusement, perhaps boasting of them, and then dismissing them from the mind, and feeling no further concern. And yet the record of each of them remains to come up some other day, with no possibility of denying them, and with nothing to say in excuse; the only choice in such a case being to take the accusing conscience to Jesus that, by the sprinkling of His blood, He may satisfy and silence it, or to bear the penalty throughout a lost eternity.

Sometimes, I dare say, you wonder what *hell* is. The word spoken to one who was there has come to us: 'Son, remember' (Luke xvi. 25). The workings of a guilty conscience, an unsprinkled conscience, its remembrance of past sins and its terrible upbraidings, even as felt now and here, give us some idea of the

state of those who have refused the only Saviour and trampled on His cleansing blood, and are now among the lost.

I do not know anything, except the love of Christ, that is more fitted to keep us from thinking lightly of sin and indulging in it, than the thought of *the record* that is kept of it by our own consciences, and the certainty that it will all be brought up another day, unless washed away in the atoning blood of Jesus.

Beware of running in the face of conscience, of tampering with conscience. There is nothing you have such cause to fear. There is no sacrifice, no self-denial, no reproach, no loss or suffering, which you had not better meet, than do anything which conscience tells you is wrong. What is any present pleasure, or gratification, or gain, in view of what must inevitably follow?

An eminent lawyer,<sup>1</sup> who afterwards became Lord Chancellor of England, made a statement on this subject, which has often been quoted, and which I especially commend to the notice of older boys: 'It was the first command and counsel of my youth *always to do what my conscience told me to be my duty, and leave the consequences to God*. I have hitherto followed it, and have no reason to complain that my obedience to it has been even a temporal sacrifice. I have found it, on the contrary, the road to prosperity and wealth, and I shall point it out as such to my children.'—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 93.

### PILOT WANTED!

'Made shipwreck.'—1 TIMOTHY I. 19. *Dec 28 '30*

THERE'S nothing sadder! To see the gallant ship clear out of the harbour with all sail set and pennons flying—like a bright, strong youth going out to face the world—and then to see the same ship, when the storm is past and the sun has come forth again, lying broken among the rocks, a poor, crushed, bruised, battered thing—this is as sad a sight as we can ever see. I have seen it, seen it many times; seen it with ships and seen it with men and women, and it always makes the heart ache.

Let me tell you about a couple of shipwrecks that have something to teach us. There was the *Nepaul*, one of the finest vessels we had in our merchant fleet. A few years ago she set out from China, homeward bound, and passed in safety through all the dangers of the great broad seas she had to cover, till she had almost reached Devonport, her destination. But there was a thick fog hanging over the waters, and the captain's signals for a pilot could not be seen. He should have anchored then and waited. Ah! it's a great thing to learn, when you have done all that you can do, to stand, simply stand, and wait for God to work. But the captain would not wait; he thought he knew the coast well enough to pilot his vessel himself into Devonport, and so he went on and on making for the harbour, till suddenly there was

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues on Education*.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Erskine.

a crash and a lurch, and the beautiful ship was a total wreck—a wreck almost within reach of the haven!

What was the captain's fault? *Presumption.* He would not wait for a pilot; he thought he knew as much of the coast as the men did who spent their lives in learning. And presumption is our great sin when we think we can get to heaven without the great Pilot, Jesus Christ. We can't do it; we may get very near; God may be very good and very patient with us, and protect us in many dangers, but no one can enter the Good Haven unless the flag of the cross shows that Jesus has the command. Run up the flag now, let Jesus have the command of your life. When the pilot comes on board the captain steps down; he becomes then but the chief officer, who takes his instructions from the pilot. That's how it must be with us, if we would enter the Harbour at last, with full sail and happiness, to receive an 'abundant' entrance. Don't trust to your own knowledge or your own cleverness; trust Jesus, 'Jesus only,' if you would avoid the shipwreck of your life. Do it at once; you can't tell the rocks you may have to steer through to-morrow.

The other wreck was just as sad.

The steamship *Central America*, on a voyage from New York to San Francisco, sprang a leak in mid-ocean. A vessel, noticing her signal of distress, bore down toward her. Seeing the danger to be very great, the captain of the rescue-ship spoke to the *Central America*: 'What is amiss?'

'We are in bad repair, and going down; lie by till morning,' was the answer.

'Let me take your passengers on board now.'

But it was night, and the commander of the *Central America* did not like to send his passengers, for that would cost the price of their passage, and thinking the ship could be kept afloat a while longer, replied, 'Lie by till morning.'

Once more the captain of the rescue-ship cried, 'You had better let me take them now.'

'Lie by till morning,' was sounded back through the trumpet.

About an hour and a half afterwards her lights were missed, and though no sound had been heard, the *Central America* had gone down, and all on board perished, just because it had been thought they could be saved better at another time.

That is how most people are wrecked. It is by delay—by putting off and putting off to a more convenient season. We have never any right to study our own convenience only: we need to study the convenience of others as well, or we shall soon be all wrong, and put others wrong too. Now whatever time we may think convenient for us, there is only one time that is convenient for God. That time is *Now!* '*Now* is the accepted time: *Now* is the day of salvation.' 'Put off, put off!'—that is what Satan whispers. 'Now, now, Now!' that is what God is calling. Which voice will you obey?—J. REID HOWART, *The Children's Preacher*, p. 158.

## THE VOICE WITHIN

'A good conscience.'—1 TIMOTHY I. 19 (with HEB. x. 22).

In a former address I tried to show you what conscience is—how much we stand in need of it, and what a help to us it is fitted and intended to be. The two texts to which I called attention were 1 Timothy I. 19, 'A good conscience,' and Hebrews x. 22, 'An evil conscience.'

Under the first head, *What conscience is*, I said there are three characters in which we should look at it—as a *Guide*, as a *Judge*, and as a *Recorder and Remembrancer*.

We go on now to consider—

**What it may be.**—The Bible often speaks about conscience, and describes it in various ways. It speaks of a 'conscience void of offence,' 'a good conscience,' 'a pure conscience,' 'a seared conscience,' 'a defiled conscience,' 'an evil conscience,' 'a purged conscience'. Now all these may be summed up under the two words—a *good conscience*, and an *evil conscience*. And when I speak of what conscience may be, I mean that it may be a *good* or an *evil conscience*.

1. *A good conscience.*—This expression may be used in more ways than one. It may be said of a *clean* or *pure* conscience, of a *cleansed and pacified* conscience, and of a *tender* conscience.

(1) *A clean or pure* conscience is a 'good conscience'. In this sense the word is used in our text. When you are *tempted* to do something wrong, and you resist the temptation and refuse to do the wrong thing, you may be said to have kept a good conscience—to have a clean or pure conscience.

About the time of the summer holidays, some of you may be tempted to cross the wall into a neighbouring garden, where the fruit is getting ripe—strawberries, or gooseberries, or a little farther on, apples or pears or plums. The sight of them 'makes your mouth water,' you say, they look so tempting. Other boys are about to become young thieves, and are planning to steal the fruit as quietly as possible. They urge you to be one of them. For a little while there is a struggle, partly because you would like the fruit, and partly because you feel it difficult to act differently from the other boys, and to bear their upbraiding. But conscience warns you that it would be wrong, and you do what it bids you. If you had done the wrong thing, it would have *defiled* your conscience; you would have had 'an evil conscience'. Whereas you have kept your conscience *pure*. You have come away from the scene of temptation with 'a good conscience'.

Or you are tempted to say what is not true. It seems as if it would benefit you to tell the lie. It might save you from punishment or disgrace. It might gain you a place in your class, or success in your game, or the approval of others. But because God and conscience forbid it, you say to yourself, 'No! Nothing shall induce me. I should scorn to be a liar.' And though you lose the place or the game or the advantage otherwise, you keep your 'good conscience'.



You are tempted to be disobedient, to be indolent, to neglect your work, to do some forbidden thing. It falls in with your wishes. You would like to do it, but you know it to be wrong. Conscience says—No. *Keep your conscience pure.* Do not sully it. Every wrong thing you say or do leaves a stain on your conscience—just like a black mark on a white piece of cloth or a sheet of paper, and your great concern should be not to have your conscience thus made black and foul. This applies alike to those who are Christians and to those who are not. The best conscience has stains enough, and, as we shall see, needs to be cleansed. But in so far as your decision as to any action or course of conduct is concerned, it is of the last importance to keep your conscience *clean*. I need not say that this is not easy. It requires a constant effort—aye, a constant *fight*. Paul knew what this was. Good man as he was, he required to be ever on the watch to keep his conscience pure. He says, ‘Herein do I *exercise myself*’—I am at pains—I take trouble—it is an object of constant thought and effort to me—‘to have a *conscience void of offence* both toward God and toward man’. And it is well worth all the trouble you can take to have it so. Do not, for the world, defile or outrage conscience by doing what it forbids. Whether other people see it or know it, or what they may think of it, is of little consequence. The keeping of ‘a good conscience’ is important above all else. Peter urged it on those to whom he wrote: ‘Having a good conscience’. And again—‘The answer of a good conscience toward God’. And Paul says: ‘For this is our rejoicing—the *testimony of our conscience*’—‘For we trust we have a good conscience’.

(2) A *cleansed* and *pacified* conscience is a ‘good conscience’. Perhaps some of you say, ‘Alas, what you have said about the *pure conscience*, is of little concern to me. At least, it can only be a thing of the *future* to me. What about the *past*? My conscience troubles me. It is defiled. It is burdened and guilty. I have done over and over many things which it told me *not* to do. And it accuses me; it condemns me. Sometimes I do not know what to do. How can I have a good conscience? Is it possible for me? Must I not carry my bad conscience with me to the end of my days, and even to the judgment-seat? I know well what conscience is as a *judge*—a condemning judge; can there be hope for me?’

Now it is here that the Gospel comes in with the good news of *cleansing for the conscience*. It not only tells of provision of grace and strength in the Lord Jesus, to enable us to keep the conscience clean and do what it bids. It does more. It tells of pardon for sin, through the Blood of Christ, who, by taking the guilt of sin upon Himself, and dying in the sinner’s stead, removes the guilt, washes out the stains, and so brings back peace to the conscience. There is no conscience that does not need this cleansing—that does not need it again and again, whether

the conscience is troubled about the sin or not. There is great danger of thinking that our conscience is so pure that it does not need cleansing. And there is great danger, when conscience is burdened and troubled because of sin, of seeking to get quit of its burden and to find peace in a wrong way. There is but one right and safe and effectual way of cleansing and pacifying the conscience. There is but one remedy for an evil conscience, and that is—the *Blood of Christ*. There are two passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews which refer to this, ‘How much more shall the Blood of Christ *purge* (or cleanse) *your conscience*’ (ix. 14)—and ‘Having our hearts *sprinkled* (i.e. with the Blood of Christ) *from an evil conscience*’ (x. 22).

Thank God, the worst conscience that ever was has thus got cleansing and peace. Some of the greatest sinners that ever lived—thieves, drunkards, murderers, whose consciences were all defiled, whose sins cried to heaven for vengeance, who could get no rest day or night, and almost felt as if hell had begun on earth—have come to Jesus, have taken Him as their Saviour, and got cleansing and peace through His Blood, so that even they had a ‘good conscience’. There is no one who may not get this cleansed and pacified conscience—no sinner who may not get it for the first time, no believer who may not get it again.

There is one remark, however, which I think it important to make here. Even where the conscience is sprinkled with the cleansing and peace-speaking blood, there must also be the putting away of the evil thing—the restoration of what has been taken from another—confession made to the injured person of wrong done, and restitution made as far as that is possible. For example, you may have taken something belonging to another—money, or some article, such as a knife or book or the like, and your conscience is troubled about it. You know you have done wrong. You feel unhappy about it. You ask what you shall do. It is not enough to confess the sin to *God*, and seek forgiveness and cleansing through the Blood of Christ. *The thing taken must be restored*. That is essential. Not a moment should be lost in giving back the stolen article. You have no more right to keep it than you had before.

If you have falsely accused some one, have laid the blame on him of what you knew he was innocent of, so that he has suffered through your false accusation, then the truth must be told, and he must be thoroughly cleared. Justice and fair play demand that.

This was just what *Zaccheus* did, when he received Christ as his Saviour. He was a rich publican or gatherer of the public taxes, and we may believe him to have done what so many other publicans did—to have oppressed and defrauded the poor, who had no power to resist. As soon as he came to Christ for the cleansing, he set about putting right what had been wrong, and the first thing he said was: ‘Lord, *the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have*

taken anything from any man by false accusation, *I restore him fourfold*'. That was his way of getting conscience put right.

I can fancy some boy having a favourite knife, which he took or got wrongly from another boy. He would not like to part with it. It has almost become a part of himself. He would not think of taking a country stroll, or going to fish, or even going to school without it. Could he not get conscience cleansed, and yet keep the knife? I say emphatically, No. It must go back *at once* to its rightful owner, or there cannot be 'a good conscience'.

I have heard of an Indian having a dollar which did not belong to him. Pointing to his breast, he said, 'I got a good man and a bad man here, and the good man say, the dollar is not mine: I must return it to the owner'; and so he did. He could not have got the 'good conscience' otherwise. You remember the story of the postage-stamp in the crown of the hat, of which I told you. The five shillings had to be returned, after twenty-five years, or there could have been no 'good conscience'.

(3) A *tender* conscience is a 'good conscience'. This comes pretty near my first remark. Still I am anxious to call special attention to it, and I have put it third instead of second, because it seems to come in most suitably after speaking of the cleansed and pacified conscience. If I can get peace for my conscience by going to the blood of Christ, does it matter very much my sinning again? Ah, yes.

Once fell and got my right arm broken. But the doctor set it, and to-day it is as well and strong as ever. Do you think I should wish to have it broken again, because I could get it put right a second time, and have it strong and well once more? Would I not rather be *more* careful than before, and avoid the place where I met with my accident?

I heard the other day of a man having a '*strong conscience*'. That is to say, he could go a great length and do very questionable things, without his conscience being troubled. Perhaps in order to create a laugh, or to be thought clever and make himself 'good company,' as it is called, he might exaggerate or go beyond the exact and literal truth, without it disturbing his conscience much. Now that is not a tender conscience. 'Old Humphrey,' speaking of such a one, says that he 'puts too much red in the brush!' All such things should be avoided.

It is very important to cultivate tenderness of conscience. Even if a thing is not altogether wrong or bad—if it has a doubtful look about it, it should not be done. There are some pieces of machinery which the smallest pin would damage or stop. Take a watch and let a grain of sand get into it, and all would go wrong. Let a grain of sand get into your eye, and you know what comes of it. Now your conscience should, in this respect, just be like the watch—should just be like your eye—the least thing of wrong should be *feared*, and *felt*, and *avoided*—and if it does get in, there should be no rest till it is *out*!

2. *An evil conscience*.—I might have spoken here of a conscience that is satisfied with itself when God is not satisfied with it—a conscience that thinks itself clean or pure, when it is far otherwise—a conscience that clings to its own 'dead works,' and that needs to be 'purged' or cleansed, in order that there may be a right serving of the living God. I wish, however, to confine myself to two remarks.

(1) *A burdened or guilty* conscience may be said to be an 'evil conscience'. It is, indeed, a good and not an evil thing when conscience is awakened out of its sleep, and begins to do its proper work of telling the sinner of his sin, and alarming him about it. That is better than to have a *sleeping* conscience—a *dumb* conscience—a *dead* conscience. We have cause to be thankful when conscience is fairly aroused and speaks out for God—all the more where it gives one no rest, until he has gone to the Lord Jesus to get pardon and peace from Him. In that case it is no more *evil* than it is evil when a man who has been sleeping or unconcerned amid the flames is awakened to a sense of his true condition, and has become alarmed about it, and earnestly seeks to escape. It does not make his case worse than before. It only makes him more alive to the real state of things.

But what I have more especially in view in this remark is the opposite of the clean conscience—is the *defiled* conscience—the conscience that has guilt lying on it when wrong is done. When temptation comes and you yield to it, knowing that it is wrong, conscience, as guide and judge, protests against it, and pronounces sentence on you as guilty; and from that moment you have a guilty or evil conscience. Which of us does not know what that is?—a conscience that has been disregarded, and that is aggrieved, at not having been listened to, amid all its warnings and protestings?

The conscience of which I am now speaking is unlike either the pure conscience or the cleansed conscience. It is no longer *pure*, and it is not yet *cleansed*. The sinner is like the criminal whom the policeman has seized in the very act of committing the crime, and whom he still holds by the throat, without his being able to get away, there being no one as yet to pay the fine or other penalty, and to set him free. I have no doubt I am speaking to some now, who have *this* 'evil conscience'. You cannot go back on your past life—you cannot go back on the past week, without things being called up that fill you with shame and discomfort and sorrow. What would you not now give that these things had never been done? They lie like lead on your heart. They burn like fire.

Some of you may have read of one who had been thinking of death and eternity, and whose conscience had been touched, as he heard the ticking of the old clock that stood in the corner of the room where he was working. It called up the sins of his past life, especially that of forgetting and rejecting God, and with audible voice it seemed to say, '*For*

*ever—where?* FOR EVER—WHERE? FOR EVER—WHERE? After a while he could bear it no longer. He rose, put his finger on the pendulum, and stopped the clock, as if that could silence the voice within. But it could not. And it was not until he had cast himself as a helpless sinner into the arms of Jesus that he found rest. To anyone similarly troubled with an evil conscience, from whatever cause, I would say, 'Go thou and do likewise'.<sup>1</sup>

(2) A *seared conscience* is an evil conscience. This is where there is no feeling—where one is past feeling—where conscience has been so often disregarded and outraged that it ceases to warn any longer, and one can sin without compunction—without fear—without shame. This does not come about all at once. It is the result of repeating sin again and again and again, till what was difficult at first becomes easy—till what made one miserable and cost many an anxious and bitter thought, and needed much resolution to do it, is scarcely thought of. The Scripture expression is, 'having their conscience seared with a hot iron'. Take a hot iron and touch your hand or any part of your body with it—how it burns—how it blisters—how it smarts all day long—how you look at it a hundred times! But repeat it again and again, and each time you feel it less, till at length you do not feel it at all. The tender skin has become hard and thick and unfeeling—almost like a piece of wood or leather.

So it is with conscience. At first it is tender, the slightest thing disturbs it. Like a sentinel at his post it warns of danger. It says, 'No passage this way. This cannot be allowed.' But by and by it is like the sentinel who has become sleepy or drunk or dead; *anyone* might come, *anything* might be done, and there would be no protest or hindrance. And this is what persistence in any sin—in any evil way, is ever bringing nearer. There are boys who blushed at their first oath, their first lie, their first little act of dishonesty, who are now utterly shameless, and could lie or swear or steal without misgiving. This may be *easier* and *pleasanter* than to have a troubled conscience, but it is not *safer*. Here is a young man who had been suffering terribly from disease in his limb—so much so that he could scarcely bear it. One morning, when the doctor came in, he said, 'Doctor, the pain is gone'. 'Surely,' you say, 'that is a good sign.' Alas! no. The doctor shook his head, and as he went out, said, 'the worse for him!' Mortification had set in. Death had begun. An *awakened* conscience may be terrible enough, but a *seared* conscience is worst and most hopeless of all.

Many people drown conscience by plunging deeper into sin. Many seek relief by rushing into drink. And yet what is this like? It is like the ostrich when pursued, thrusting its head into the sand, and because it no longer sees its pursuers, fancying that all is safe. It is like sailors in a storm, flying to the spirit casks and drugging themselves with drink, so

<sup>1</sup> *Daniel Quorn*, first series, by Mark Guy Pearse.

as not to see their danger—so as to drown their fears, thus taking away all hope of escape. When one's conscience is seared, and he can do wrong without a pang, we might shake our head like the doctor, and say, '*the worse for him!*'

What it Leads to.—What is the effect of having a good or evil conscience?

1. A good conscience leads to *happiness and peace*—an evil conscience to *misery and despair*. Have you not found it so? When you have done what is right, when you have resisted temptation, when you have refused to do the wrong—however difficult and even painful it might be at the time—have you not felt a glow of joy and happiness afterwards that was a full recompense? And so, when you have got the guilty conscience cleansed—when you have taken your sin to Jesus and laid it upon Him, and looked in faith to His precious blood—what relief and rest and blessing there has been! And, on the other hand, what misery comes of the 'evil conscience'! There is not one of all whom I address who does not know it. However pleasant the thing may be, in prospect or at the moment, it is no sooner done than it brings its punishment with it, in the shape of unhappiness, depression, discomfort. Oh! who shall describe the wretchedness, the sinking of heart, the despair of an *evil* conscience? There is no illness, no bodily suffering ever to be compared to it. John Bunyan gives us a picture of it in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, in '*the man in the iron cage*'—imprisoned, without hope, and feeling that he has brought it all upon himself. A 'good conscience' is a better blessing than any the world can give. An 'evil conscience' is the most terrible of all curses.

2. A good conscience inspires with *courage, independence and fearlessness*—an evil conscience fills with *cowardice and shame*. 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.' You all know this. When you have done wrong, how ashamed you feel—how you start—how you fear being discovered—how you blush—how your heart beats! When any reference seems made to the matter—how you fancy everybody knows it—how you cringe to those who are in the secret and so have you in their power—how you lose your independence, and are afraid to do anything that would displease them—how you do not care to be left in the dark, or to be alone! It is an *evil conscience* that makes people *cowards*. Adam '*hid himself* from the Lord God among the trees of the garden'. Why? He had an evil conscience. Felix, the Roman governor, '*trembled*' before Paul his prisoner. Why? He had an evil conscience. Herod was in terror when he heard of Jesus, and could not be persuaded that He was not John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded. Why? He had an evil conscience.

On the other hand, when a man has the testimony of a good conscience nothing can daunt him. He needs to fear nobody. He is not afraid of anything being found out. He is independent. Like the 'Village Blacksmith'—



He looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.

Any boy who wishes to be brave and fearless—let him study to have a 'good conscience'. I give that as the best of all prescriptions for a brave spirit. Though the whole world were against you, it does not matter. You may be unjustly blamed—you may suffer wrongly, but the 'good conscience' will bear you up, or rather *God* will, and sooner or later all will come right.

I think it is Mrs. Gatty who, in one of her interesting and instructive volumes, tells of a young servant who was charged with stealing a valuable jet necklace. It had been left in the room where she was. Nobody had been there but herself, and it had disappeared. She could only deny the theft. She could give no explanation. She was dismissed from her situation in disgrace, and her father, who was gardener in the place, also got his leave. But she carried with her a good conscience. And in course of time, when the roof of the house was being repaired and the plumbers came to clean the gutter, *there* was the missing necklace, where no hand could have put it. It was found that a tame jackdaw had carried it out at the open window, and so the young servant was cleared.

I have heard of a young grocer's boy, Frank —, being asked by a fellow-apprentice to accompany him on his Sabbath excursions, and when he refused, being persecuted in every possible way. One thing after another disappeared from the shop, and when at last a sovereign went amissing, a policeman was brought in, Frank was examined, the gold piece was found sewed into the lining of his jacket, and he was taken off to prison. And what supported the poor lad? His 'good conscience'. In two days the truth came out, the real culprit was discovered, and Frank returned home in triumph.

A *conscientious* person has always the best of it. He is trusted and respected. It is about the best thing that can be said of anyone, that he is 'thoroughly conscientious'. I can hardly wish *you* anything better than that you should be *conscientious Christians*. In closing this address, I would earnestly express the hope that all my youthful readers may bear this honourable character. It is better than to be rich, or clever, or learned. It is worthy of your highest ambition and unceasing effort. And let me add that, as you should be jealous of tampering with your own consciences, so you should beware of tampering with the consciences of others. Let the rule for yourselves, and for others as far as you can influence them, be—

Keep conscience as the noontide clear.

—J. H. WILSON, *The King's Message*, p. 111.

### THE 'LION SERMON'

I TIMOTHY IV. 16; I PETER V. 5-11.

QUITE lately there was a curious service held in an old church in London.

It was on the 16th of October there was preached

in the church of St. Katherine Cree, Leadenhall Street, what was called the 'Lion Sermon'.

It is preached every year on 16th October. It has been preached every year in that same church for the last two hundred and fifty years.

If you wanted to be present and would go a little earlier than the hour, you would hear the most lovely chime of bells—a chime beginning in the ordinary way, only more softly pealing, and then breaking into hymn tunes—'Sun of my soul,' 'Abide with me,' 'The happy land,' and the like. Then there is the service, made very short; then the event of the evening—the sermon, the 'Lion sermon'.

And this is what the people present that Tuesday evening heard.

There was once in the city a very pious man, called Sir John Gayer (or Gair). At one time he was Lord Mayor of London. Sir John happened to be in Asia at one period of his life. And when he, with his caravan, was travelling through a desert place, he found himself face to face and alone with a lion. Everybody of his company who could have helped him had gone forward. Sir John knew that only God could deliver him. He thought of Daniel in the den of lions. He perhaps thought of Paul, who at one time was expecting to meet an emperor who was as cruel as a lion. And he fell on his knees there before the beast and shut his eyes and cried to God to shut the mouth of the lion. And when he had finished his prayer and opened his eyes, the lion was nowhere to be seen. So when he came back to London he set aside a sum of money to be given away in gifts to poor people every 16th of October, and to secure that a sermon should be preached to tell the generations to come how God heard his prayer and delivered him from the mouth of the lion.

Lions? 'This was an *actual* lion.

Lions? There are stone monuments of them! In abbeys and cathedrals you may see knights with their feet resting on the lion.

The lion the knights sought to trample was the evil spirit which goeth about like a roaring lion.

Perhaps you may never have to face an *actual* lion. But this other lion you will have to face. Who is it to help you to subdue that? Only God.

There is the lion of sloth.

There is the lion of passionate anger.

There is the lion of untruthfulness.

There is the lion that rends the soul (Ps. vii.).

There is the lion that waits secretly for his prey. —ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 103.

### GREAT GAIN

(A *New Year's Sermon*)

'Godliness with contentment is great gain.'—I TIMOTHY VI. 6.

A HAPPY New Year to you, the best and brightest that you have ever had!

'What is the good of wishing us that?' says surly Bill. 'It does not bring us anything. I've wished for things hundreds of times, and nothing ever came.'

Well, it is a very pleasant thing to feel that people love us enough to wish us any good; and it means that they *would* give us what they wish for if they could. So I will wish you a Happy New Year; and as I can't give it to you I will do what is perhaps better—I will try and show you how to get it for yourselves. Now there is one thing I wish for you all. I wonder if you could guess what it is. Sometimes I go into the great city of London, and see all the people hurrying along—crowds of men and women, and even boys and girls: they are all hurrying after what I wish for you. And away in the country the ploughman ploughs for it, and the miller grinds for it, and the woodman fells for it, and the miner goes down the deep dark pit for it, and the fisherman puts out to sea to look for it. All the busy world is eager to get it. It is *gain*—*great gain*. And that is what I wish for you—*great gain*. Once there was a king who had immense wealth. He had a throne of ivory overlaid with gold, and six ivory steps, with carved lions on each step, leading up to it, and a foot-stool of gold. Almost all the things in his house were of gold. As to horses and chariots, he had so many that there were four thousand stalls to keep them in. And every three years his ships came in, bringing gold and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks. If ever a man knew what gold could do, this great king did. He was as wise as he was rich, and he said that *there was a gain which was more than pure gold*.

Years afterwards there lived a man who gave up all he had and went about preaching. He was very poor. Often he was in want. He went through all kinds of dangers, now in wrecks, and now amongst robbers, and now amongst cruel men. And he who was so poor says just the same thing as the king who was so rich. He says, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain'.

And this is what I wish you all—this godliness with contentment that is great gain. Godliness is a long word that you may not understand. But we can make it into two short words that you can easily see the meaning of. It is God-likeness, to be like God; that is, to be true, and good, and loving. And that is more than all the wealth and splendour of the king.

This is great gain, because it is *something in us—in our hearts*.

The great gain is a good heart. God-likeness is great gain. But God-likeness is not all. Godliness *with contentment* is great gain. It is a dreadful thing for anybody to be discontented, but it is very much worse for a religious man, because it *ought not to be* so. It is wrong, and he could set it right if he would. If men have good and true and loving hearts, they ought to have contentment. It reminds me of a rich man who had nothing to do, and he got a fancy into his head that he was very ill. He lay in bed all day long, and took all kinds of medicines, and sighed and groaned about his symptoms, and really thought that he had enough to feel very ill about, and that he was

going to die. One day a clever doctor that I knew came to see him, and found that he was quite well; but how could he make the man know it? At last he said, 'I think, Sir, you should go to the south of France'.

'Oh, I could never get there!' groaned the poor man.

'Well, I will go with you and take you.'

The rich man was glad enough to pay the doctor for going, and the doctor wanted a holiday—so they started. But as soon as they got to France the doctor made him get up at six o'clock in the morning, hustled about with him in cabs and trains, and made him walk two or three miles at a stretch. And he had to do it, or the doctor would have left him behind in strange, out-of-the-way places. So gradually the rich man began to find that he could do it all—could get up and walk about, and eat and work like other people. And so these good people ought to be contented; and they could be if they set themselves to be so. They ought to have godliness *with contentment*.

This is what I wish for you all—*Godliness, with contentment*, which is great gain. Now, you can think of one or two ways in which it is greater gain than gold. *We can always have this gain with us*. You remember the story of the king who went to fight in the East, and, as he came home, he was taken prisoner, and shut up until somebody should send money for a ransom. There, a poor lonely prisoner, how he would think about his kingdom and his throne, about his crown and jewels and all his gold—how he wished that he had them with him. But they were a long way off, and could not help him now. All that gain of his was of no use to the poor prisoner. But when we have this gain of godliness with contentment we carry it with us wherever we go. St. Paul, who said this, took it with him into prison, and he sang there, quite happy, and in all kinds of strange places he was always rejoicing. Long ago, people used to talk about a philosopher's stone which turned whatever it touched to gold. This 'great gain' is the true philosopher's stone. Contentment in the heart makes everything golden.

And then, again, it is great gain because *we can take it with us when we must leave all other gain behind*. Have you ever read about William the Conqueror, the great king who had such wealth, and lived in such splendour? When he was dying in France, all his friends left him to secure their own property, and as soon as he was dead even the servants took what they could and hurried away. The dead body of the great conqueror was left almost naked on the floor. He who had his thousands of followers could hardly find a kindly friend to bury him. He who had so great a realm could hardly find a grave. He was dead, and he left all his great gain behind. But when St. Paul was an old man he had this godliness with contentment in his heart, and he felt that he could take his great gain with him. He said, 'To die is gain'. And this was the gain: 'Henceforth

there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day'.—MARK GUY PEARSE, *Sermons for Children*, p. 110.

### THE LITTLE THORN TREE<sup>1</sup>

I TIMOTHY VI. 6-9.

CONTENTMENT is great gain.

Be pleased to be what you are, and be pleased with the things you have.

Some children, when they grow a little and begin to look about them, and see there are houses grander than their own home, and people richer than their parents, begin to be discontented. Then they begin to put discontent into words and say :—

The old house, it is too old.

The clothes, they are not fine enough.

The holidays, they are too short.

The people we know, they are not grand enough.

If we could only be richer, grander, finer-looking, and more surrounded by great friends !

Nothing they have pleases them ; only something they have not would please them.

The German people are the great story-telling people of Europe. A famous story of theirs is about a tree. It is this :—

In a deep forest in the German land lived a little tree which had this kind of discontent. It was a thorn tree and might have lived a happy life, for it was strong, and nobody troubled it. But it was not satisfied. 'Why do I have hard, bare, prickly thorns ?' it said. 'Other trees have leaves : I only ugly thorns. If I had my wish, I should have leaves of gold.'

And although it is a strange thing to tell, the little

<sup>1</sup> From a German ballad by Friedrich Rückert.

thorn tree had its wish. When the next day dawned, it saw that it had leaves of gold. And the light of the sun shone on the golden leaves, and the tree made a splendid show.

The little tree laughed for joy.

But in the midst of its joy a robber came. 'Gold !' he cried, 'leaves of gold ! That is splendid for me.' So he plucked off every leaf, put them in his pockets, and went on. At night the poor tree was quite bare.

It was very much cast down. But once more it was allowed to wish. And this time it wished leaves of glass. So leaves of glass grew on the branches. And the morning sun came out and shone on the leaves, and it was a great sight. The little tree clapped its hands for joy.

But when night came, there arose a storm. It came crashing through the wood, breaking the branches, overturning the trees : at last it came to the little glass-leaved tree. And with one mighty blast it shattered the leaves into fragments.

And the little tree had sorrow once more.

But once again it was allowed to wish. This time it wished for green soft leaves like other trees. These came, and then, when it was glad for their beauty, the little goats came and began to lift up their mouths and bite and nibble, until before night every leaf was eaten, and the tree was bare.

Then the discontented tree saw its folly. 'I was not pleased with my thorns,' it said. 'But thorns are best for me.' So it wished back the thorns, and the thorns came back.

Robbers did not touch them ; storms did not break them ; goats did not eat them. At last with the things given by its Maker it was contented.—

ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 120.



# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

## A GOOD SOLDIER

'A good soldier of Jesus Christ.'—2 TIMOTHY II. 3.

All Christians may be regarded as soldiers.

I. **The Enlistment.**—'Voluntary self-surrender.'

II. **The Drill.**—'Exercise thyself unto godliness.'

III. **The Warfare.**—'Put on the whole armour,' etc.

In conclusion. If we are not on the side of Christ we are on the side of the enemy. 'He that is not with Me is against Me.'—*Seeds and Saplings*, p. 62.

## THE GENTLE HEART

'Be gentle unto all men.'—2 TIMOTHY II. 24.

THE other day a friend brought me a song which was sung in Italy six hundred years ago. He called it 'The Song of the Gentle Heart'. It is a song in praise of gentleness in the life, and of gentle deeds and words and thoughts. And what the song says is that all gentleness has its home in the heart; and that unless there be gentleness in the heart there can be none in the life.

At the time this song was sung, there were many who thought that gentleness could only be found in palaces and castles, and among the people who dress in splendid clothes. But the song says that it may also be found in the most humble cottages, and among people whose hands are rough with daily toil. It is the gentle heart which makes people gentle. Whether a home be rich or poor, if those who live in it have gentle hearts, that home is the dwelling-place of gentlefolks.

After hearing this song I could think of nothing else. The words of the old singer kept sounding like music in my soul. And I also, as if I had got back his eyes, began to see his visions.

And all the bypast week these visions have been coming to me. When I went out into the country, they met me in lonely roads. When I went into the town, I saw them in the crowded streets. Night and day, and every day, they came. And every day they seemed brighter than the day before. At last I said, I will bring them into my words to the children, and they shall be visions for them as well as for me. I will call them Visions of the Gentle Heart.

I. One of the first visions of the Gentle Heart I saw came to me hid under the rough form of an old Roman soldier. If I had seen him only when he was dressed for battle, I should not have thought of him as gentle. I should have seen him carrying a sword to kill men with, and a shield to defend himself from being killed by others. And as he had

other soldiers under him, I might have heard him speaking to them in a loud, commanding way, and telling them to do hard and cruel things.

But when I saw him his sword and shield were hanging on the wall, and he was sitting beside a little bed in his room in the soldiers' barracks. After one of his dreadful battles he had got for his share of the spoil a little boy who had been taken captive—a poor little boy, torn away from father and mother, and forced to be a slave. He was the slave of this soldier; he cooked his food, he tidied his room, he polished his armour, he went his errands. Just a little slave—nothing higher. This rough-looking soldier might have beaten him every day if he liked; nobody would have found fault. He was his own property—just as his horse was—just as his dog was—and he might have sold him like any other property.

But under the outside roughness of this soldier was a gentle heart. He did not beat his slave; he loved him; he looked upon him as his own son; he let the little man have a home in his heart. It was a joy to him to see the child happy; it was a grief to him to see him sad. And it was a great grief to him when one day the little slave fell sick. Then the rough soldier was as tender as a mother could be. He sat by his bed; he watched over him day and night. Many a time, I am sure, as the thought came into his heart, 'My little boy will die,' the hot tears came rolling down his cheeks. And he thought the boy was really about to die; the little fellow's breathing became more feeble, his face grew very pale, his eyes were closed.

One day as the big soldier was sitting by the little bed somebody came in and said, 'A great prophet has come to the town. Jesus of Nazareth has come.'

'Jesus of Nazareth?' the soldier said; 'the healer of sickness? Oh, that He would heal my boy!'

But then this thought came into his mind, 'I am a soldier of the nation that is ill-treating the Jews. I am not worthy that a Jew so good as He should do anything for me.' Then other thoughts came, and in his great love for the boy, and knowing that Jesus could heal him, he at last ventured to send this humble message: 'O my Lord, my servant is near to die, and Thou art able to save from dying. I am not worthy that Thou shouldst visit my house. But only speak the word, and he shall live. Thou art Lord of health and sickness, as I am a lord of soldiers. Say to this sickness, "Depart," and it will depart. Say to health, "Go to this soldier's servant," and health will come to him, and he shall live.'

Now when Jesus received that message, a great joy came into His heart; and He said to health, 'Go to that soldier's little servant, and make him well, for I have not found a heart so gentle as his master's—no, not in all Israel'.

And He had no sooner spoken out on the street than the thing He commanded was done. Health came back to the sick boy in the soldier's house. The eye in which there had been no light opened; a little smile passed over the worn face as he saw his dear master still nursing him. And the gentle heart of the master swelled up in thankful joy, as he stooped down and kissed the child whom Jesus had made well again.

II. My next vision also took me back to old times, but not so far back as my first. It was to times that were very evil I was taken. There was a wide open place in an ancient city, and a great crowd of people standing far off in a ring. Inside the ring were priests and soldiers in black cloaks and red. In the centre was a stake of wood, with faggots of wood piled round about it. And there, chained to the stake in the midst of the faggots, was an holy man of God, whom evil priests were about to burn, not because he was bad, but because he had preached the Gospel of Christ to men.

Then I saw the evil men putting a light to the faggots; and I saw that the faggots were wet, and slow to catch fire, and the slow burning of the fire was a great agony to the man at the stake. And then came to me this strange but real gleam of the Gentle Heart. Out from the crowd stepped an old woman with a bundle of dried faggots and some straw. She set them on the pile on the side the wind was, and they blazed up at once. And I saw a look of thankfulness come over the face of the poor sufferer as he said, half speaking to God, and half to her, 'Oh, holy simplicity!'

It was the holy simplicity of the Gentle Heart. She could not bear to see his slow pain. Since he was to die for Christ, for Christ's sake she shortened his suffering.

III. That vision faded, and instead of the evil fire I saw a beautiful garden in Geneva. I saw a young couple with happy faces come out of the house, come down the garden walk, and seat themselves beside a beehive. It is Hüber the student and Aimée, his beautiful wife. What we read now in books about the queen bee and the other bees, and the honey and the wax, was found out for the most part by this man. He spent his life in the study of bees. But look! he is blind. He has been blind for years. He will live till he is an old man, and be blind to the end. And yet to the end he will watch the ways and find out the secrets of the bees. And he will be able to do this because the gentle Aimée is by his side. Her friends said to her, 'Do not marry Francis Hüber, he has become blind'. But she said, 'He therefore needs me more than ever now'. And she married him, and was his happy wife and fellow-student forty years. She was eyes to the blind. She looked into the hives,

and he wrote down what she saw. And she never tired of this work, and she did it with her whole soul. And the story of the bees, as it was seen and written in that garden by these two, will be read in schools and colleges when Hüber and his beautiful Aimée are themselves forgotten.

It is a hundred years ago since they began to study the bees together, and they are both long since dead. But still shines out for me in the long, helpful, patient and loving service of Aimée, the Gentle Heart. And it was of that very heart, I am certain, her husband was thinking in his old age, when he said, 'Aimée will never be old to me. To me she is still the fair young girl I saw when I had eyes to see, and who afterwards, in her gentleness, gave the blind student her life and her love.'

IV. After that I saw an island on the coast of Africa. And in the island I saw a house for lepers, with a great high wall round about it. And I beheld, when a leper or anyone else entered that house, that the gates of the great walls were shut upon them, and they never more were allowed to come out. The house was filled with lepers—lepers living, lepers dying—and no one to care for their sufferings or speak to them of God. Then I beheld two Moravian missionaries bidding farewell to their friends on the shore, crossing over to the island, coming up to the gates, and passing in amongst the sick and the dying, to nurse them, to preach to them, to live with them, and never more go out from among them, till they should be carried out dead.

V. Among my Christmas cards this year was one from a dear old friend in the north. And among my visions of the Gentle Heart was one in which he was the centre. It is a long while now since he retired from business and turned for work to his garden and his flowers. But it is nearly as long since, as he went along the crowded streets of the town in which he lives, and saw homeless boys and girls on the pavement, the thought came into his heart to gather the orphans among them into a home. So he gave only a part of his time to his garden and his flowers, and the rest to provide this home. And the home was built, and the homeless ones gathered into it—a large family now. And in that home, and for that home, my friend spends many a happy hour. He is justly looked upon as the father of the home. Yet he is so modest that his name never appears in the reports of the home, except among the names of the directors, and those who give money for its support. Once, indeed, he was taken by surprise: the other directors asked as a great favour to have his portrait for the home. And if you were going there, and asking the children whose portrait it was, they would answer, 'It is the portrait of our papa'.

One year some failure in bank or railway made him much poorer, and he could not give the twenty pounds which he had given to the home each year. He might have said quite honestly, 'I am sorry, but I can't afford to give my twenty pounds this year'. But the gentle heart had something more in it than

honesty. That very year a new flower had been brought to London from Japan, and each plant of it cost a pound. The orphans' papa sent to London for a plant, took it into his greenhouse, cut it into twenty bits, and struck a new plant out of each. Then he sold his twenty plants at one pound each. And so that year too there was joy in this Gentle Heart that he was still able to pay his twenty pounds to help to bless little orphan children.

VI. Then I saw a vision of a rich man's son. In the city of Glasgow once lived a worthy merchant, whose children I knew. As God had blessed him in his buying and selling, he became a rich man. And having a great love for country life, he took his riches and bought some fields on which he had played and gathered flowers when a child, and also the mansion in which the old laird of the place was wont to live. There was just one thing he forgot to do; he forgot to make his will, and say to whom the mansion and fields should go when he died. So by and by, when he died, no will could be found. Now he left behind him his wife, four daughters, and an only son. But as no will had been made, the mansion, and the fields, and a great part of all his riches, came to this only son. He was in London when the news came that his father had died, and that he was now a rich man. Just at that moment money would have been very useful to him, for he was a young merchant beginning life, and no one would have blamed him if he had said, 'The money is welcome, and with it I shall push my new business on'. But God had given him a Gentle Heart. He left London as soon after he got the news as he could get a train. And although it was late in the day when he arrived at his native city, the first thing he did was to go to the house of a friend who writes out wills. And that friend, at his request, wrote out a will by which the mansion and the fields were made over to his mother all her days—and all the rest, both land and money, which his father had left, was divided, share-and-share alike, between her, his sisters, and himself. And when that was all fixed, he went to his home and buried his father. Somebody said to him afterwards, 'But why did you go that very night and have the will made out?' He said, 'I thought I might see that it was my duty to do it. If I had left it till next day, my duty might not have seemed so clear.'

That is the way of the Gentle Heart.

VII. One vision of a Gentle Heart came to me out of the years when I was at school. Among my class-fellows was a Jewish boy. His real name was John, but some of the bigger boys had given him the name of Isaac, and by that name he was known. He was a shy, timid-looking boy, tall and slender, with a little stoop. He was very clever at making musical toys. He used to bring pan-pipes and singing reeds and wood whistles to the school. Sometimes he brought a little flute, and in play-hours, when the bigger scholars were at their games, he would stand leaning against the wall, with a crowd of little fellows around him, whom he taught to play on his simple reeds

and whistles, or to whom he played on his little flute.

I sat beside him at school, and got to know him well; and I never knew him to tell a lie, or do a base, or mean, or cruel thing. And I do not think as much could be said of any other boy amongst us all at that school during the years when he was there. He helped the backward boys with their lessons. I have seen him oftener than once sharing his lunch with a schoolfellow that had none; and although he had no quarrels of his own, he took up the quarrels of the little boys when the bullies were ill-treating them. One day he saw a big lad of fifteen beating a little fellow of eleven. 'Now, Tom,' he called out, 'let that little fellow alone.' 'You mind your Jews' harps and whistles,' said the bully. Isaac made no reply, but went right up to the hulking fellow, seized the wrist of the hand which had hold of the little boy, gave it a sudden twist and pinch, which loosened the hand-grip in a moment, and let the little boy free. It was done so quickly and neatly that all the boys standing around burst into laughter at the bully. From that time the bully was Isaac's enemy, and every evil trick that could be done against the Jew lad he did, and every spiteful word that could be spoken he spoke.

But it happened one afternoon, when school was over, that Isaac was standing at his father's door, and he saw a great crowd turning into the street. Boys and men were storming up, and there, in front of them, running as if for life, and white with terror and fatigue, was the bully. He had been in some boy's prank or other, and was being chased by those who wished to punish him. Isaac saw at a glance how matters stood, and, standing back within the door and holding it open, he said, 'Come in here, Tom; I'll let you out another way'. And he let him out into another street. Isaac saved his bitterest enemy, and Tom escaped. It was Tom who told us all this. Isaac never referred to it. But we all noticed that Tom said as much good of the Jew boy afterwards as he had said evil before.

VIII. But while I was thinking of these visions, as they came one by one, I found that they began to come two and three together, and at last in a crowd. And it is only little bits of what I saw after that I can now tell.

I saw a brave man plunging into a river one dark night and saving a woman who had stumbled in; and when the friends sought him in the crowd to thank him, he was not to be found. The brave man wanted no thanks. His reward was that he had saved a human life.

I saw a gracious man going into a bank one day, and entering a large sum of money to the credit of a widow, who had lost husband and means the day before.

I saw a wounded soldier on the field of battle refusing the water he was thirsting for, that it might be given to one beside him who was worse wounded and needed it more.



I saw a tender lady passing from bed to bed in a hospital, and speaking cheering words to the sick people, as she did some gentle service to each. And I saw the thankful smile that came up over their wan faces as she passed.

I saw daughters refusing homes of their own that they might wait beside their sick mothers. I saw them lovingly tending the dear sufferers as if they were queens, and counting it joy to be able in this way to show their love.

I saw a man stand up before an angry mob, and say to them, 'It is falsehood you are speaking against my friend'. And when they cried against him in their anger, he defended his friend the more.

I saw a brave captain on the great sea, bringing his ship close to a burning vessel crowded with human beings, and waiting beside it—risking his own ship in the flames—till the day closed, and far on through the night, till at length every soul was saved.

And in each of these visions, and in many more that I cannot tell, what I saw was a gleam of the Gentle Heart.

At last, however, all these visions melted away, but I saw that it was into the light of a far greater vision.

I thought it was night, and I was with a crowd of people upon a great mountain. There were mountains all round, mountains below, mountains above, a great stretch of mountains, and the tops, reaching far up into the sky, were covered with snow.

We turned our faces to the mountain-tops, and we saw coming out on the peaks of the highest just the faintest little flush of light. Then it grew stronger, then red, then one by one the great snow-peaks kindled up, away up into the sky, as if some fire were shining on the snow; and indeed a fire was shining on the snow. For as we turned our faces the other way to come down the hill, we beheld the morning sun rising into the sky. It was the flame of the rising sun which we had seen shining on the lighted peaks.

Now that is just what my visions of the Gentle Heart have been—fires kindled by a greater fire; far-off gleams of the Gentle Heart of Jesus. The gentleness I have been telling you about is just light from Him. He is the sun. They were the hill-tops, great and small, aflame with love like His love. And it was into the light of that largest love my visions faded.

Yes, His is the heart from which all hearts take their gentleness. It is from His heart all the gentleness of mothers and sisters, all the gentleness you have ever known in father, or brother, or companion, or nurse has come. His is the gentlest heart the world has ever known, or ever can know. It is this heart which in the Bible the loving God offers to each of us. This is that new heart which will new-make you, and bless you, and bring you at last to glory. Just the heart of Jesus, the gentle, loving, merciful heart of Him who once died for us, and who

still lives to help and bless us all.—A. MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 3.

### THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY III. 15.

WHEN I was in London lately, I spent one evening with a very learned friend, a Jewish doctor. He showed me a splendid new Hebrew Bible with a new translation and hundreds of Doré's illustrations, which he had just purchased. This led us to talk about the Bible and its influence, and in the course of our talk my friend recalled to memory a toast that was drunk to in Scotland when he was a lad at college. The toast was this: 'A clean sword and a dirty Bible'. Now a toast is a sort of prayer. It is the expression of a wish, and in that sense we may understand it to-day.

'A clean sword': that is the wish that wars are to end, and peace prevail all over the world. That is a right wish to have, that there should be no more bloodshed, no more fighting between nations. I fear we are still far away from such a state. But yet it is our duty to wish and pray for that good time.

Now, although it was an old-fashioned way of speaking to say 'a dirty Bible', yet you must not suppose it was the least disrespectful. Not at all; it simply meant a well-thumbed Bible, a Bible often handled, often read, frequently referred to, the commonly used book of a Bible-loving people.

It is a fine thing to see a handsome new Bible, with pictures, and gilt edges, and clasped boards, but it is better to have a Bible constantly used, often opened and read, even though the edges are frayed and the pages dimmed.

Some time ago we had an Indian officer addressing a religious meeting in our hall. He told us he had been careless and foolish in his youth, and when he was leaving home to join his regiment his father gave him a Bible, but he never read it; he forgot that he had it for years, till he was wounded and sick and set aside. Then in his loneliness he began to read his Bible, and a new light dawned upon him, and he was converted to God. He said: 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Thy Word'.

Suffering may fall on any one of you; you may be laid on a sick-bed. You may even be called, young though you are, to die.

What would help you to suffer nobly? Only this, to have begun early to walk humbly with God.

At a meeting of the Bible Society, which I attended some years back, the following incident was mentioned:—

The body of a youth, seventeen years of age, was washed ashore. He had gone out on the rocks to read, in preparation for Oxford, and, immersed in study, must have been unconscious of the rising of the tide till it was too late to escape. On the fly-leaf of his pocket Bible, found upon him, he had written, in a bold firm hand, the following words: 'In danger, I now declare that I do trust in Jesus as

my own Saviour, and I have trusted Him for about five years. I know that my sins of heart and of action are many and grievous, but I do pray to God to forgive me for the sake of the perfect righteousness of Christ and to receive me in safety and holiness with Himself. I pray God that He will bless my father and mother, and give them His Holy Spirit, and keep my brother and sisters in His faith and fear.' How forcibly this touching incident proves the fidelity of God to His Word. 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.'—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 9.

### PUNCTUALITY

'Be instant in season,'—2 TIMOTHY IV. 2.

PAUL had been a very active man, always on hand when there was anything to be done. But when he wrote our text he was an old man, and was in prison for preaching Jesus Christ. He was soon to be beheaded as a martyr, dying for Christ's sake. A little while before he was put to death he wrote a letter to a minister of the Gospel named Timothy, a young man. Paul told Timothy to 'be instant in season, out of season,' in his preaching. But as he who is not prompt about other things is not likely to be in preaching, we may apply the text to all things that we do.

To be instant in season is to be attentive, ready. It is a prompt attention that may at any moment pass into action. It is much more than to be punctual, and yet it includes punctuality, and we will apply it to being punctual.

To be punctual is to be on hand at the fixed or set time, not tardy or behindhand; to be prompt. Let me illustrate it: Church worship begins at a fixed time; and to be punctual at the church is to be there and in your seats before the services commence. If you come late, you are not punctual. So the school begins at a fixed time; and to be punctual at school is to be there and in your seats before the school begins. If you agree to meet one at a certain hour of the day, to be punctual is to be on hand at that hour and minute. If you come after the time, you are not instant in season, but you are tardy.

You ought to try to be punctual at all times and places, and these are the reasons why:—

1. You will do more if you are punctual. The punctual boy or girl, man or woman, keeps ahead of his work or study, and does not lag behind it. Take your lessons. If you are instant in season you will get them before the time comes to recite them. You will keep up and ahead of your recitations. But if you are not punctual, then you will lag behind. The time will come to recite and you are not ready. A part of the lesson will not be well learned. So if you make an agreement to meet one, to be on hand and

have it done with saves time for other things. So if you have work or chores to do, do them punctually at the proper time, and you will do them best and quickest. If you are prompt, punctual, instant in season, you will save time and do more work and study.

2. You will have more time for play if you are punctual. If you have a task to do of any sort, and you are promptly at it in time, it is soonest done, and being done you can then play with a free heart. I am glad that our common schools teach punctuality so thoroughly that the children hurry in when the last bell begins to ring. Do your tasks promptly and you will get more time for rest or play or reading good books and papers.

3. It is your duty to be punctual. If you have ever seen soldiers march, you know what it is to be in line. If one is fast and another slow, if one is prompt to obey and another tardy, the line is all out of joint. It is crooked and no one can admire it. Hence soldiers are trained to keep step, to move together, to march in line. It is the duty of every soldier to be instant in season, that he may not put others out of order. So if you have heard a band of music play, you noticed what perfect time was kept. One did not begin and then another, and then the third, each as he pleased; for they are all trained to begin together, to keep together, and to close together. The tardy ones put the others out and have to leave the band if they cannot learn to be on time. They have to be instant in season.

Now it is your duty while young to form habits of promptness, readiness. You need to learn to be punctual, on hand in time, instant in season. You see how quick they are who play ball. They are all alert to catch the ball, but to catch it they must be where it is, and so they are intent, they watch for it, they are instant in season. You want to learn to do the same in all the affairs of play, study, work, and life. You want to be punctual, prompt, so as to make no failure in life.

It is even said of God that He is not slack concerning His promises. He is not slow in fulfilling them. He is always on time. So we should always be on time. And when He says: 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'; 'Those that seek Me early shall find Me,' we should obey promptly. Like a good soldier we should obey orders. We should be prompt to hear and act. We ought not to wait for a better time. Act promptly, be instant in season, in obeying your parents, your teachers, your Saviour. When Christ said to Matthew: 'Follow Me,' Matthew obeyed instantly and followed Him. God commands you to do the same. Never be behindhand in any duty. Then God, even our God, shall bless you.—A. HASTINGS ROSS, *Sermons to Children*, p. 267.

# THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

## IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD

'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.'—TITUS 1. 2.

God cannot die. He cannot lie. Lie! no, let us say it with reverence and with gladness, His oath says that He may as soon die.

But now I go on to say that we have two grand lessons to learn from this impossibility for God. Here is—

- I. An argument for trust, and
- II. An argument for truth.

**I. For Trust.**—We often ask of a fellow-creature, 'Can he be trusted?' The question has in it such thoughts as these. Is he heedful enough? Is he wise enough? Is he kind enough? Is he true enough, not to deceive or disappoint us, if we rely on him? Now God in all views of His character may be safely trusted—for He is wise, mighty, good, and faithful—He cannot lie. Every word of His is purest gold. There is no drawback about it. Do you remember how gladly Joshua and Israel acknowledged that? 'Ye know,' said that great leader to the assembled people, 'in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.'

Will you think reverently of this, that God can have no motive for lying. Even bad false men, generally speaking, do not lie without some purpose to be served, as they think, by the falsehood. When Joseph's brethren brought to Jacob their father his torn and bloody coat, and said they had found it, they wanted to conceal their cruel conduct in selling their brother into Egypt, and to prevent his being sought after and brought back. When Ananias lied, he wanted to get credit for being as liberal as other Christians who had sold their estates and given the money to the Church, and yet have some of the price he got for his land for his own use. Nay, even Satan, when he told the first grand lie to Eve, had a purpose he was trying to accomplish by it. It was a very wicked end he thought of; to spite God; to ruin man; but yet this prompted his false words, 'Ye shall not surely die.' But God, supreme in power, and in bliss, can have nothing to gain by falsehood. All things He wishes He can easily reach and have. But besides, falsehood is all against His nature. Falsehood is a dark thing. It conceals. It has folds. It would not be seen through. 'God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.'

Not to trust God when He speaks is, as John says,

to call him a liar. Now that is a fearful word. I remember when at school boys would sometimes very recklessly call each other by that odious name. Grown people, alas! sometimes do the like. But, bad as men are, they feel that liar is a word of terrible and unbearable reproach. Will you fling it, then, at God? Ah! take care; for none of us can escape being a proof that God never lies. He will show that He keeps His word with them that will not trust Him, as well as with them that do. He threatens, and He fulfils. Oh, it must be a fearful thing to meet God making good that word—'The soul that sinneth shall die'. Why should any of us so meet Him? He does not wish us to die. He wants us to live. He likes to be trusted to give us life.

None perish that Him trust.

A Highland drover once heard a minister, eminent in his day for holy worth, read from the Scottish version of the thirty-fourth Psalm the concluding verses ending with that line. It touched his heart. After service he waited on the minister, and said, 'Oh, sir, can that be true?' And the man of God, beginning from that Scripture, preached unto him Jesus. It pleased God to bless the word to him, and he became a happy believer in the only Saviour. Frequently, in the prosecution of his calling, he had occasion to pass through the town where God first awoke him, and brought him to himself. It was his custom, in so doing, always to call for the minister by whom the word of God was spoken to him, and ever as the two met, the first word uttered on either side was this—

None perish that Him trust.

But,

**II. Here is an Argument for Truth.**—If God cannot lie, because His nature is all against lying, then He must very much dislike lying in others. So the Bible says He does, 'Lying lips,' it tells us, 'are an abomination to the Lord'. 'He destroys all them that speak leasing.' 'All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.' Is not that fearful to think of? Then, if it be a blessed and glorious thing in God to be incapable of lying, surely to be like Him in this must be noble and good. Happily there are men and children too, of whom it may be said in a lower, but still in a grand sense, they cannot lie. They have been trained to such habits of truth, and they have such holy fear of God, that nothing will induce them to speak what is false. In the town of Devizes you may see, in the marketplace, the following inscription, 'The mayor and corporation of Devizes avail themselves of the stability



of this building to transmit to future times the record of an awful event which occurred in this market-place in the year 1753; hoping that such a record may serve as a salutary warning against the danger of impiously invoking the Divine vengeance, or of calling on the holy name of God to conceal the devices of falsehood and fraud. On Thursday the 25th of January, 1753, Ruth Pierce, of Pottera, in this county, agreed with three other women to buy a sack of wheat in the market, each paying her due proportion towards the same. One of these women, in collecting the several quotas of money, discovered a deficiency,

and demanded of Ruth Pierce the sum which was wanting to make good the amount. Ruth Pierce protested that she had paid her share, and said she wished she might drop down dead if she had not. She rashly repeated this awful wish, when, to the consternation of the surrounding multitude, she instantly fell down and expired, having the money concealed in her hand.'

The lessons from the text may thus be shortly taught. God cannot lie. Believe Him, therefore; and be like Him.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 734.

# THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

## THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE

'Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord?'—PHILEMON 16.

THIS letter which tells us the story of the runaway slave was written by St. Paul in quite a private way and for a private purpose, just as you in these days might write such a letter to a gentleman in whom you were interested. All the other Epistles written by St. Paul, such as the Romans, or the Corinthians, or the Ephesians, are about great and important Christian truths or doctrines, and we have to follow him very attentively to be able to understand all his reasoning about these important spiritual matters. But when we turn to this Epistle or Letter to Philemon, it is about nothing more than a runaway slave; and because it does not contain anything about those great spiritual principles of which all the other Epistles are full, the people who lived some three or four hundred years after St. Paul said that it could not possibly have been written by the Great Apostle himself, because, said they, St. Paul was much too great a man to concern himself about so trivial a matter as a runaway slave. It seems that we might just as well say that the incident of Jesus taking the children in His arms cannot be true, because Jesus was far too great to concern Himself about the children. We, in these days, however, see the greatness of the character of Jesus in the fact that He did concern Himself about the children, and so in St. Paul's letter about this runaway slave we see proofs of the Apostle's greatness, and of the fact that he had caught much of the spirit of Jesus.

I. Let me tell you now something about the slaves in those days. The conditions under which we live are so different that we can hardly form any idea of the state in which those slaves existed. So many slaves were there, that in one province, it is said, there were three slaves to one free man. Some masters owned ten or even twenty thousand slaves; and there is in existence now the will of one of the masters of those times in which between four and five thousand slaves are willed away. These slaves had no rights; they were simply, as it was termed in those times, live implements. If a slave stole from his master, or ran away, he could be scourged or crucified as the master pleased. About the time when St. Paul was writing of this runaway slave, a Roman senator had been slain by one of his slaves in a fit of anger, and the law demanded that all the slaves under the same roof at the time should be put to death, the innocent with the guilty. There were as many as four hundred. You say, surely these were not all put to death for

the offence of one man? They were, and when some of the more humane people rose against such cruelty, the Roman Senate sent an army of soldiers to put them down, because, as one of the senators said, 'The slaves must be held down by fear'; and another said, 'As though heaven cared for slaves'.

II. Philemon had a slave whose name was Onesimus. Now this Onesimus, who was Philemon's slave, one day stole something from his master and ran away. That he was very determined about what he did we can tell by the great distance he travelled. He resolved not to stay in hiding in that neighbourhood, but to make his way to the world's great centre, the wonderful city of Rome, which was the London of those ancient times. There he could mix with the crowds of men and not be known; there he could gain a living for himself, and be free from the fear of discovery.

Now comes a very remarkable thing. Paul the Apostle is in Rome, preaching the Gospel. Onesimus hears that the Apostle is here, or, it may be, comes across him with a crowd about him, even though at that time the Apostle was a prisoner, for he was still permitted to reside in his own hired house. Perhaps, if St. Paul did visit Colosse when he was at Ephesus, Onesimus saw and heard him, and it may be with a desire to get a glimpse of him again, and to hear once more something of the new strange Gospel he was preaching, he stands and listens in the crowd. But whatever it was that brought him under the influence of the Apostle, the fact remains that just as the truth of the Gospel made its way to the heart of his master Philemon, so that truth makes its way to the heart of the slave Onesimus; it may be that he was pricked in conscience at the remembrance of his theft, or, perhaps, he had had so hard a time in getting to Rome that he was worn out with his journey, and, wretched in heart and mind, longed after the peace, the joy, and the salvation through Jesus Christ.

How tenderly St. Paul received him, and how interestedly he entered into his life, this beautiful letter to Philemon tells us.

Bearing this letter, Onesimus makes his way back over those hundreds of miles from Rome to Colossæ. How his heart would beat the nearer he got to the city! how he would wonder whether the letter would have the desired effect upon his master! And then as he came through streets well known to him, and saw again faces so familiar, the news would hasten on before him, the slave Onesimus has returned! and all would wonder what this quiet but strange return of his own will could mean. At last, like the Prodigal, with broken words upon his lips, he would

give the letter of Paul the aged to his master. And the wonder of it all, almost beyond belief, and the joy of it all, to so good a Christian as we can believe Philemon was, would prompt a welcome so ready and forgiving, that, had the Apostle himself been present, he would have been more than satisfied. The runaway slave returned a brother in the Lord.—JOHN EAMES, *Sermons to Boys and Girls*, p. 9.

### NO STEALING

PHILEMON 16.

ROWLAND HILL preached a funeral sermon upon his own coachman. He said in his sermon what a good man the coachman had been to him for thirty years. He had been an honest, upright man, a good, religious man, and an excellent servant to him. But he was once a highway robber! I will tell you how

Rowland Hill became acquainted with him. He attacked him when he was going along the road. 'I was not frightened,' said Rowland Hill, 'I talked kindly to him. I said, "Why are you a robber? Why do you follow this dishonourable pursuit?" "Well, sir," said he, "I am out of place. I am miserable. I have no money. I am driven to despair."' Rowland Hill said, 'Call upon me to-morrow morning'. He did. And there and then Rowland Hill took him as his coachman. For thirty years this man served him faithfully as coachman, though he once attacked him as a highway robber. So you see, though we may have stolen, we may again become useful members of society—only we must do right things.—JAMES VAUGHAN.



# THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

## WHAT WILL MY CAPTAIN SAY?

'The Captain of their salvation.'—HEBREWS II. 10.

FOUR years ago last April (1908) an American liner, the *St. Paul*, had left the docks at Southampton and was making her way in a blizzard down the Solent. She was on her outward voyage to New York. Coming up the Solent at the same time was a cruiser belonging to the British Navy named the *Gladiator*. She had left Portland that morning with two hundred and fifty men on board, who were all happy in the anticipation of their return to Portsmouth. Both vessels were enveloped in a blinding snowstorm. It is said that the eyes of the men on the look-out could barely distinguish objects a yard or two ahead, and though both vessels were blowing their sirens their sound was lost in the howling and shrieking of the wind. Neither vessel knew of the other's approach. Suddenly the grey hull of the warship loomed up, broadside on, just in front of the bows of the liner. The engines were immediately stopped, but it was too late, and the *St. Paul* drove straight on to the doomed cruiser and buried her stem deep in the armoured vessel. The crash was terrific. For a few moments the two ships remained locked together and the liner seemed to be carrying the warship forward impaled on her bows. The passengers on the decks of the *St. Paul*, which were higher than those of the *Gladiator*, could see the white set faces of the blue-jackets on the doomed vessel. Yet in these thrilling and critical moments the coolness, the courage, and the heroism of British seamen were magnificently displayed. But no courage or heroism could prevent the awful results which followed directly the vessels parted. The waters poured through the huge hole torn in the side of the warship and in a few moments she sank in the stormy waters. Happily many got to the land which was not far distant, but some thirty found a watery grave there that day.

In connection with this sad disaster there is recorded an incident of great interest. As the bow of the *St. Paul* was momentarily locked in the wreckage of the cruiser's hull, some of the blue-jackets climbed up over on to the deck of the liner. One of them, as soon as he had planted his feet on the bow of the *St. Paul*, saluted the captain of that vessel, and for a moment seemed dazed by the experience. Rapidly recovering himself, he saluted again. Then looking round he seemed to realise his position and what he had done and gasped out, 'Oh, my God, what have I done? What will my captain say?' Then he leaped over the side of the vessel again, down on to the decks of the sinking cruiser, and was seen no more.

Often I have wondered whether he was one of those who were saved, or whether he went down with the vessel. It is an incident one can never forget. Again and again those words ring in my ears and come to my lips: 'Oh, my God, what have I done? What will my captain say?'

You see, the sailor suddenly realised that he had deserted the post of duty. He saw in a moment that he had been selfish in thinking of his own safety alone. He had not troubled to see if he could help to save the ship or assist in saving others. In this moment of great need he had done nothing but save himself, and he was ashamed. For the moment he had forgotten his training, his duty, his fellow-seamen and his captain. He had not upheld the honour of the British seamen, and as it all suddenly came to mind he was ashamed of himself and felt that his captain would be ashamed of him too. Who cannot imagine the feeling with which he uttered those words, 'What have I done? What will my captain say?'

'The Captain of our Salvation,' says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, He is our great Captain, and we stand much in the same relationship to Him as that in which the sailor on the *Gladiator* stood to the captain of his vessel. There are many other ways in which to think of our Lord, but it is of that way I wish to think now. He is our Captain; we are His Christian soldiers. It is for Him to command; it is for us to obey. There can be no proper relationship between us and our Lord except there is the true spirit of loyalty and obedience in us. There is no greater crime or disgrace in the British Army and Navy than to refuse to obey the command of an officer. All have to be obedient from the lowest to the highest or the army and navy might as well be disbanded at once. Without this same spirit of obedience in Christ's soldiers His warfare against evil cannot be successfully carried on in the world.

You are a soldier of the Great Captain Jesus Christ. Try everything which relates to your life by this same question, 'What will my Captain say?' When you forget your duty in thought only for yourself ask, 'What will my Captain say?' When you have played the coward's part and were not brave for Christ's sake—when you have been ashamed of your Christian principles and were silent when you ought to have spoken—when you have been wilful and unkind—when, like the disciples, you have deserted your Lord and Master and left Him alone, then ask yourself, 'What will my Captain say?' And perhaps the thought of His disappointment and

sorrow will help you to retrieve your character and face your duty even as a similar thought did the sailor upon the ship.—JOHN EAMES, *The Shattered Temple*, p. 162.

### WHAT FAITH SEES

'Now faith is the evidence of things not seen.'—HEBREWS XI. 1.

**I. Faith Sees through her Glass an Unseen God.**—No man hath seen God at any time. Other kings have been seen, but not 'the King immortal, eternal, invisible'. Him 'no eye hath seen or can see'. Yet faith has no doubt that God is.

You will not find that anywhere God proves by an argument that He exists. His way of proving His being is by showing Himself, though not to the eye. He does so in various ways, and where there is capacity to perceive His presence, there is faith of it. A father, to his children that can look at him, does not need to prove by an argument that he is their father, if their eye is sound. But I well remember a little child, whose brain in disease was touched and reeling, that did not know her own father—thought him a stranger, and shrank from him when he stood near. Neither would his voice assure her; he said, I am papa, but she would not believe him, and was afraid of one to whose bosom she was accustomed to cling as her refuge and joy. He reasoned with her in his distress not to be known by his child, but it was useless arguing. The disease had to be cured first, and when it fled no argument was needed. The father's face was enough. I knew a little boy that on the day he died, restored for a short hour from dark stupor, was fondly asked, Who is this? and who is this? The soft answer, in failing breath, that came with a sweet smile, 'Papa, mamma,' can never be forgotten. To see was to know. And I have thought when that boy's soul went to heaven, as I believe it did, supposing his angel-guide to ask him of the Saviour, Who is He? he would know Him at once—to see with the eye of a pure spirit would be enough—and the answer would come in the radiant joy of immortality—'It is Jesus, my Lord and my God!'

**II. Faith Sees with her Glass an Unseen Saviour.**—Christ Jesus has not always been unseen. He was once on earth, and people saw His face, and heard His voice, as we hear each other. He was once a little child, like yourselves. He grew up, as you grow. He went to church. He walked, He sailed, He rode, He sat at table, He ate, He slept. He took children in His arms. He healed sicknesses with a word and a touch. He was crowned with thorns. He was nailed to a tree. He was buried. He rose, and was seen again. He went up to glory, and His disciples saw Him as He went up through the air. But since that, with two or three exceptions, nobody on earth has seen Him. But hundreds and thousands believe as firmly as if they had been with Him in the days of His flesh that He was once here. Do you so believe?

Christ Jesus is still seen in heaven. After His ascension, you recollect that Stephen said he saw Him

through the open skies. You remember also that He met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and looked on him, and spoke to him, and changed his heart. You have read the description John gives of Him when he saw Him in vision in the Isle of Patmos. At these times Jesus came out through the blue veil behind which He passed away. But in the world beyond the veil they always see Him. The angels do. Departed saints do. Your pious friends that have gone to heaven do. I do not know how this is. I cannot tell how spirits see. But there is some way in which souls in heaven are in Christ's presence, different from the way they enjoyed it on earth. For Paul, as you know, says of himself, that he was in a strait betwixt two; not knowing whether to prefer living or dying; he knew that his living was needful for the Church, but had 'a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better'.

**III. Faith Sees through its Glass an Unseen Judgment.**—This is unseen, because future. It will be seen. And such a sight it will be as was never seen before. Let me just try and tell you what will be seen on that great day, when Christ comes 'the second time' to visit our world. I shall say nothing but what the Bible tells us.

Jesus will 'come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory'. At his face the heavens and the earth will flee away. The sun and moon will grow dark, as if turned into sackcloth and blood. Then a trumpet, exceeding loud, like a thousand thunders, shall be blown, and the sound will go down into the deeps of graves, and the depths of sea. And the dead shall rise from every place where the dust of men is sleeping; some from lonely tombs in moors, and deserts, and mountain-sides, and some from crowded churchyards, and some from the bottom of the ocean. And all the living on earth will be changed, as quickly as your eyelids twinkle. Then angels will be seen flying to and fro in every direction, gathering Christ's people together, and separating them from the wicked. Two companies will be made, one very happy and shining; one very miserable and dark. They will be brought before a great white throne, high up in the sky. On the throne the Saviour will be seated, angels round about Him, and all His person burning with indescribable glory. Then the air will take fire, and the earth, and the sea, and will all burn together, crackling and crashing in one tremendous flame. And when the Judge has spoken to the righteous, and to the wicked, an awful tempest of wrath will drive away the enemies of Christ into the punishment they deserve, and Jesus will go up with His saints into the presence of His Father, to dwell with them there for ever and ever.

**IV. Faith Sees with its Glass an Unseen Hell.**—I wish I did not need to put this head into my sermon. I wish faith's glass could find nothing in the direction of the outer darkness. But hell is revealed in the Bible as surely as heaven is. And very awful words are spoken about it. It is said to be a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. What a dread-

ful representation! If you had stood where Abraham stood on the morning after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fiery storms, it would have been terrible to see the whole plain smouldering and smoking like a furnace. Outside the city of Jerusalem there was a valley which, after the days of Isaiah, became a place for collecting all kinds of refuse and off-scourings, and consuming them with fire. Consequently the whole place was filthy and disgusting, with fires always burning in different spots, sending up smoke by day, and flaring in the gloom of night. It was called Tophet and Gehenna; and this last is the New Testament name for hell. Now, do not mistake me. I do not say that hell is such a place. But these things are what the Bible uses to be a figure of the terrors of hell. For it is fire that 'is not quenched'. And it is a 'worm that never dies'. It is 'everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power'. It is said to be in 'the outer darkness'—darkness outside the line which the rays of the most distant sun reach—

Beyond the bounds of light, and life, and love.

There are in it 'weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth'. Oh, children! flee, flee from the wrath to come!

Blessed be God, there is another world which faith looks to as her own. So I remark:—

**V. Faith Sees with its Glass an Unseen Heaven.**—There are seen heavens—the airy, cloudy firmament, the starry skies. But beyond them is another—the heaven of heavens, the home of God.

I will tell you some things about that heaven taught us in the Bible. It is a beautiful place. Sometimes it is called paradise, a pleasure-ground around the King's palace; and you may be sure that it is richer and more beautiful than the garden of Eden itself. Sometimes it is called a city; and then it has jewelled foundations, and golden streets, and jasper walls, and a light that leaves no need of sun, or moon, or lamp to shine in it. Sometimes it is called a house; and then it is God's house, with a multitude of mansions furnished and prepared for his sons to dwell in. It is a holy place. There are no bad men in it, and no bad thoughts and feelings in anyone's heart. Holy angels stay there. The holy Jesus is there. It is full of God. It is also a happy place. You might search as long as you pleased, you would not find a tear in it, for God 'shall wipe away tears from all faces'. You would never hear a sigh of sorrow there, for 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away'. You would never meet a sick person, for 'the inhabitant of the land shall no more say, I am sick: for the people that dwell therein are forgiven their iniquities'. You could never find a grave in it, for there 'shall be no more death'. Heaven is a large place, moreover. There are many mansions in Christ's Father's house, and many sons of glory already there, and many more on the way. There is room in it for you. Heaven is a busy place. There is none idle in it. They serve God day and night in His Temple—thinking of Him, praising Him,

doing His work. And it is a sure place. That heaven shall never pass away. The throne of God is in it, and it endures for ever. The new Jerusalem is an abiding city. All the cities of earth decay. Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre have all perished; and Rome, Paris, London must, at least, be destroyed with the earth; even God's own city of old, his beloved Salem, cannot remain; but the heavenly city of peace is founded for immortality.—J. EDMOND, *The Children's Church at Home*, p. 199.

### ON GIVING PLEASURE TO GOD

'He pleased God.'—HEBREWS XI. 5.

At the beginning of a new year it is good to ask, whether there is any thought we can receive into our hearts which will help us to lead better lives than we lived before.

There is one thought which very few have opened their hearts to, which yet is one of the best thoughts we can think. It is the thought that we have been made, and are kept in life, that we should give pleasure to God.

It will make a great difference in our lives when, instead of doing things to please ourselves, or our companions, we do everything to please God.

I once read a poem, by Mary Howitt, in which this good thought is put into the lips of a very little child. He was called Willie. One day Willie's mamma saw him sitting very silent in the sunlight, with all the men and women and the beasts and birds of his Noah's ark set out in a row. 'What are you thinking about, Willie?' said his mamma. Willie answering, said:—

You know that God loves little children,  
And likes them to love Him the same;  
So I've set out my Noah's Ark creatures,  
The great savage beasts and the tame,—  
I've set them all out in the sunshine,  
Where I think they are plainest to see,  
Because I would give Him some pleasure  
Who gives so much pleasure to me.

It is true that it is only a very little child who would think of giving God pleasure in that way. But although the way of doing the good thing is a little child's way, the thing itself is good to do.

It is good for everybody to try to give God pleasure.

There was a great prophet in the world once, in the days before the ark, who tried to do this, and who did it all the days of his life. It was the prophet Enoch. At the end of his life, the story of his life told by God Himself was this: 'He pleased God'. Not himself, not his friends, but God. I have tried to see what it was in his life that gave pleasure to God, and I find it was this, that 'He walked with God'. Now you know why it is you walk with some young people and not with others. It is because you know them and love them, and know that they love you. Enoch knew all that about God. He knew that God loved him and he loved to be in God's company, and to have God near to him in everything he



did. 'He walked with God': in the very way God walked—the way of truth and right. 'He walked with God': he had God for his friend, and told him by prayer all that was in his heart. 'He walked with God': he went about with God doing good, helping the helpless and trying to bring people to God. Every day he would say to himself, 'How can I please God to-day?' And day by day he kept doing the will of God, and walking out and in with God for his friend.

But there was a greater than Enoch who pleased God. You remember this is the very thing which the voice from heaven said of Jesus: 'This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased'. And God was well pleased with Jesus. He began to be pleased with Him even when He was a child. It is said that Jesus, when He was a little boy at Nazareth, 'grew in favour both with God and man'. Could anything better ever be said of a child's life? To be in favour with God! To have God well pleased with you! That is to be like Jesus Himself. And you may really be like Jesus in this very thing if you do as He did. He set Himself so to give pleasure to God that it became His meat and His drink to do God's will.

A little girl came one day to the late Charles Kingsley, and said: 'Dear Mr. Kingsley, give me a song'. And Mr. Kingsley, who had a great love for children, wrote this song for her:—

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;  
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long;  
And so make life, death, and that vast for ever,  
One grand, and sweet song.

It is a great pleasure to God when His children do noble things. But I wonder if the little girl for whom this song was written knew—I wonder if you know—what the noblest thing ever done on this earth was! It was dying on a cross. It was Jesus laying down His life to save the world. Nothing else gave such pleasure to God as this. Jesus died to let God's love be known. He died that this love might shine in upon sad hearts and sorrow-filled homes; and that the poor, and the heavy laden, and those who are out of the right way, like the prodigal in the parable, might be drawn by it to God.

To help children to be like Jesus in this, some things are mentioned in the Bible which give pleasure to God. It is a great pleasure to Him to see His children sharing the good things He has given them—food, or clothes, or knowledge, or happiness—with those who have none. That was the kind of sacrifice which Jesus made. He gave up the life which His Father had given Him that all the world might share it. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. It is a great pleasure to God, also, when children honour and obey their parents. Jesus did that. One of His last thoughts on the cross was to make provision for the honour and welfare of His mother Mary when He was gone. But the greatest thing of all in giving pleasure to God is love. It is impossible to please Him unless there be some knowledge of His love in our hearts, and some love to Him in return.

The heart of Jesus was filled with both that knowledge and this love. And all who wish to please God as Jesus did, and know these ways of doing it, will earnestly try to follow them.

But this leads me to tell you what is the first way of coming into this life of giving pleasure to God. It is a way so simple that a very little child can understand it. It is just letting God please you. Yes, that was the secret of the life which the Lord Jesus lived. He began by letting His Father in heaven please Him. The desire of God is to give pleasure to His children. There is a Psalm which speaks of God's ways with His children, where it is said: 'Thou shalt make them drink out of the river of Thy pleasures'. And God sets Himself to give us this very pleasure. He gives us the very things to be pleased with which please Himself—the river of His own pleasures. This is the river of which it is said in another Psalm 'it maketh glad the city of God'. And this river which maketh glad the city of God, and is the river of God's own pleasures, is nothing other than the love which is in Jesus Christ, which brought him to die for us, and with which God is ever well pleased. This is the way in which God works when He is working in us to bring us to will and to do his good pleasure. He begins by getting us to be pleased with the Son in whom He Himself is pleased. It is the same as if He said, 'See, this is He on whom My love is ever resting, in whom I have endless joy. Take pleasure in Him.' And whoever is brought by God's great kindness to be pleased with Jesus and with the things in Him with which God is pleased—and these things are love and mercy and truth—begins in that very pleasure to give pleasure to God.

To be pleased with Jesus is a child's first step in the life of giving pleasure to God.

Now I give you this good thought. I ask you to admit it into your hearts. I advise you to take it for the rule of your lives. Say in your own heart to God, 'O my Father! from this time forth I will try to give pleasure to Thee'.

In the fairy stories the young prince or princess who is setting out in the world always meets a kind fairy who gives a cap, or a ring, or a flower, or a ball, which must never be let go or lost, and it will be help by the way. But this which I am offering you is a better gift than any fairy could give. This will be better than wishing-cap or ring, better than gold or silver. The child who shall say, 'I will from this day live to please God,' will live a happy, good life. And at the end God will tell the same thing about the life of that child as He told about Enoch's and Christ's. He will say, 'I have been well pleased with this child'.  
—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 103.

#### NICOLAS HERMAN

'He endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible.'—

HEBREWS XI, 27.

I. ABOUT two hundred years ago there was living in the city of Paris an old man who was so holy, and in his

holiness so happy, that people came to him from far and near to learn the secret of his life.

He lived in a great house with a company of religious men. Among those men his place was a very lowly one. He was their cook, and it was down in the kitchen of their great house that he had to spend his days.

For more than forty years this man lived in that house doing this lowly service. And through all those years, the one desire and joy of his heart was to be always with God, and to do nothing, say nothing, and think nothing which might be displeasing to Him.

His name in his youth was Nicolas Herman, but in his old age, Brother Lawrence. He was born in Lorraine near the beginning of the seventeenth century. His parents were too poor to give him much schooling, and although, in some way or other, he learned to read, and in his old age could write a sensible letter, he remained through life without the learning which you to whom I am speaking receive at school.

As a boy he was very uncouth and very stupid. He was always doing awkward things. Nobody who saw him then could have foretold that he would one day cease to be awkward and become careful and wise and helpful. It is only God who can tell from the outside of a boy what sort of man he will become.

But although Nicolas was poor and unlearned, and in all his movements ungainly and awkward, he had, even as a boy, a gentle heart. And one day this gentleness showed itself in a very wonderful way. It was a day in winter. Everything was cold and bleak and bare. On this particular day Nicolas, walking about, happened to come upon a tree that was leafless. Something drew him to look at the tree, and as he stood before it, looking, the thought came into his mind that that very tree, bare and dead though it seemed at the time, would soon be all covered with leaves, with bloom, and by and by with fruit. And there came to him, in the very heart of this thought, the thought of God. He seemed to see at a glance that before all these changes could take place, God must be present to work them. Only God, working on the very spot, could bring back life to the dead tree. His soul at that moment caught sight of the great truth that God is everywhere present. He said to himself, 'He is here, on this very spot'. He learned that day that God was not a God far off, but near. He was so near that He would be present to cover that tree once more with leaves. Standing before that tree, he saw that he was standing in the very presence of God. This nearness and presence of God became one of the thoughts of his soul.

In a dim way at first, no doubt, but more and more clearly as years went on, he saw God everywhere. From that day onward he lived as one who had been admitted, for one happy moment at least, into the presence of God. And I like to think that as he turned his steps homeward that day, the poor, untaught, and awkward boy, whom everybody was

already trying to scold into less stupid ways, may have carried this new thought like a new joy in his heart, and said to himself, 'Poor and stupid though I be, God is near me; and lowly though my father's cot is, God is there'.

This was the beginning of religion in his life, but not yet of happiness. Nicolas had a long way to go and many things to learn and suffer before the happy years of his life began. A blessed thought had been dropped by the Holy Spirit into his soul. But it was as yet like a tiny seed which has neither root nor stem. The happiness which is in a holy life does not spring up in a day. Sometimes it takes years to grow, and often it has to be watered by our tears. At any rate that was the case with Nicolas Herman. He was like the man spoken of in one of the Psalms, who went forth weeping bearing precious seed. But it was to be a long time before he came back rejoicing with the fruit.

He was only eighteen years of age when he saw the vision of God's presence in the tree. After that he had to become a soldier; and when he was set free from being a soldier, he became a footman in a private family. He was still unhandy in his ways. His master said of him that he was a great clumsy fellow, who broke everything he was set to carry.

II. But this was only the outside of his life. All this awkwardness and stupidity, this want of handiness in doing things, was a sincere grief to Nicolas. He did earnestly wish to have his faults corrected. He was willing to submit to any suffering by which his awkwardness should be put away. And now, being a man, and being very earnest about leading a right life, he began to look about for the best means of having his faults corrected, and he resolved at last that he should apply for admission to the house of the Barefooted Carmelites. There, he thought, I shall be taken to task, and if I fail to do well I shall be punished. And I am content to be punished until my faults are removed. The brethren consented to receive him into their kitchen and give him work as cook.

Now it was a custom with those brethren, before receiving any new member into their company, to put him upon trial for a time; and during that time the person wishing to become a brother was put under instruction for his soul. This was a very precious time for Nicolas. He got time to think. But this at first brought him into new trouble. When he came to think about himself he found that much more needed to be put right in him besides his awkward ways. The thought that he was in God's presence led him to ask himself what sort of object he must appear in the eyes of the holy God. And then his heart sank within him. He saw that he was a poor sin-laden man, not worthy of a single glance from God. He recalled evil words he had spoken and evil deeds he had done, and thought that God, as the just Judge, could have no choice but to banish him for ever from His presence.

III. But by and by—his history does not tell either

in what manner or at what precise time—the Spirit of God directed him to look to the Cross and the blood of Jesus. He then saw that the holy God is a Saviour as much as a Judge, and that He is full of love; that He gave His son to die for sinners, and that there is cleansing for all sin in the blood which Jesus shed. Nicolas was slow to believe that there could be cleansing for him. For four long years he feared that he should be shut out from God's presence at last. And for six years longer doubts of his salvation came back upon him from time to time. But all the while there was this fine resolution in his heart: whether he was to be saved, or shut out from salvation, he resolved to do the thing that was right. 'Whatever becomes of me,' he said, 'whether I be lost or saved, I will continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him.'

But God did not leave him in this uncertainty. He came to his help, as He always does to those who are in earnest about their salvation. He brought him out of all his fears and into perfect happiness and peace, and He worked so great a change upon him also that all his awkwardness came to an end.

Although Nicolas never ceased to think meanly of himself, or to look upon himself otherwise than as a sinner, his whole view of God was changed. Instead of seeing Him as a judge about to punish a criminal at His feet, he saw Him as a gracious King who had come down from His throne to serve him. 'This King,' he said, 'full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, and gives me the key of His treasures.'

IV. After that the principal thing in Herman which helped him to live a happy life was the lesson he learned in his boyhood, when he stood before the leafless tree. A thought entered his soul that day which never left him. It was the thought that God is everywhere present. It was, as I said before, a very tiny thought for him at the first, a mere little seed of thought. But when the Holy Spirit took him in after years and set him before the tree on which the Lord Jesus died, the thought grew and spread and filled his whole soul. He saw then that if God must be present to cover a dead tree with leaves and fruit, He must much more be present when a dead soul, like his own, was to be changed into a living one. A strong feeling took possession of him that he was always in the presence of God, and a feeling not less strong that it was his duty continually to remember that fact. And to this duty he set himself. Day by day, and every hour of the day, he said to his soul: 'Soul, thou art in the presence of God thy King'. At the beginning of his religious life, he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in forming the habit of remembering this presence. He strengthened the habit by thinking often of God's goodness and mercy and nearness. If business took his soul away from the thought for a little, he sought a fresh remembrance of it from

God. At length it came to be natural to him to feel that he was every moment in the Divine presence. He was so much under this feeling that his prayers were like conversations with one who was in the same room with him; and sometimes like a joyful sense of that presence, as if his soul were telling its wants by simply looking into the face of God. At such times he was insensible to everything but the love of God. His highest joy was to feel himself in the presence of that love. It was a joy so sweet that he likened it to the joy of an infant at its mother's breast. Indeed, he seemed to himself sometimes to be just an infant drinking happiness out of the bosom of God, so inexpressible was the sweetness he tasted in the presence of his Lord.

V. Another thing in Nicolas which made his life a happy one was his putting God's will always before his own.

He had set his heart on being like the Friend in whose presence he so much loved to be. And he had learned that the nearest and best way to this likeness was to let this Divine Friend rule him in everything. So he placed himself altogether under the will of God. He gave up everything to God that God might be everything in his life. He gave himself. He gave body and soul. He gave will and wish. He kept nothing back.

It was not easy to do this at first. But he prayed for help. And all difficulty came to an end. And it became both easy and pleasant, until at last, next to the joy of being in the presence of his Divine Friend, was the joy of giving up everything for that Friend's sake.

His life, after that, was a life of obedience to God. At every step in life, and in all things—in things small as well as great—in things painful as well as pleasant, he said to God, 'Thy will, and not mine, be done'. He liked to remember how much God had given up for him. He liked to fill his soul with the thought that Jesus gave His life to redeem him. And he looked upon himself, in consequence, as one that belonged to God. 'I am not my own, but God's,' he said; 'and I will think no thought, I will speak no word, I will do no act except as God allows me.'

And this was his life. His soul's ear was bent to listen for the commands of God. His greatest joy was in fulfilling these commands. He would do no action and suffer no thought which he knew to be contrary to them. His whole endeavour was to let God work His will in him. He felt himself so entirely in the hands of God, to do, or to suffer, as it might please Him, that he sometimes likened himself to a block of stone which a sculptor was carving into a statue. God who loved him was this sculptor. And Nicolas would present himself as such a stone before God, and say, 'O my best Friend, my Maker, my Lord, shape me into Thine own image: make me entirely like Thyself'.

VI. A great secret in the happiness of Nicolas was the close connection he kept up between his religion and his daily tasks.



He took his religion with him into the kitchen. He could not bear the error of some that religion was only for the church, and for religious meetings. Religion and business with Nicolas were not two things, but one. He did all the work of a cook as the servant of God and out of love to God. And in the very humblest part of his duties he tried to give pleasure to God. Like the Apostle who said, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,' Nicolas felt that whether he was cooking in the kitchen, or worshipping in a church, he had all the same to glorify God.

To this old man the kitchen was as holy a place as a church. He was with God there! Daily he had sweet talk with Him as he went about his humble duties. And the fireside, with its pots and pans, and with its heats and smells, became like a gate of heaven unto his soul.

And this was the more beautiful in him because naturally he did not like the work of the kitchen. But he put his dislike of the work aside and did it joyfully out of love to God. He began every part of his duties with silent prayer. As the work went forward he would lift up his heart again in prayer. And when it was finished he would give thanks to God for helping him. Or, if he had failed, he would ask God to pardon him. In this way his distasteful work became a joy to him, and easy. And it was so mixed up with prayer that his soul was more united to God amid the tasks of the kitchen than when he was in his private room.

Nicolas believed that a holy life did not depend upon finding some high and heavenly kind of work to do; but in doing common work, the work of every day, for the love of God. It is a holy life, he held, to do for God's sake the things we commonly do for our own. He put great stress on the doing of little things to God. He used often to say that Christians ought never to weary in doing little services for His sake. 'It is not the greatness of the work which God regards,' he would say, 'it is the love with which it is performed.'

A friend who saw him at his work in the kitchen has borne witness how truly it was work for God. 'His very countenance was edifying. There was such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not fail to affect the beholders. In the greatest hurry he still preserved his heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit.'

Nicolas himself said, 'The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.'

VII. There were many other things in this life which helped to make it a happy one, which I should be glad to tell about, but I must content myself with one more.

Nicolas had such perfect faith in God that when he brought any difficulty before Him in prayer, when he came with some burden, or sorrow, or care, he really left it with God. After laying it on God, he did not suffer it to trouble him more. And it was the same with his sins. When he had once asked God to forgive him for some particular sin, he left the sin with God, and believed that he was forgiven, and went on to do the next duty on his path. In this way he had an almost unbroken peace and joy of mind.

To people who came to ask him about the way of happiness, he was accustomed to say: 'Keep the thought of the Presence of God ever in your hearts; and give yourselves entirely to the study of His love, and you will come to perfect happiness. The more you know of His love, the more you will wish to know; and the greater your knowledge is, so much deeper will be your love, and so much greater your desire to be continually in His company. Cast everything out of your hearts that God may have the whole room to Himself. And when God has taken up His abode there, trust Him in everything to the end of your lives.'

Writing some advices of this sort when he was about eighty years of age, he added, 'I hope from God's mercy the favour to see Him in a few days'. And within a few days he went home to be with God for ever.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD.

#### WARNING AGAINST DISCONTENT

'Be content with such things as ye have.'—HEBREWS XIII. 5.

THE subject we have now to consider is—the *Bible warning against discontent*. And I wish to speak of three good reasons why we should learn to mind this warning,

I. **We ought to Mind it, in the First Place, 'for our own Comfort'**.—Now suppose that you have a long walk to take every day, but you have a thorn run into your foot, or a sharp stone in your shoe—could you have any comfort in taking that daily walk? Certainly not. If you wished to walk with any comfort, the first thing for you to do would be to take off your shoe, and throw away the sharp stone that was in it; and then to have that thorn taken out of your foot. You never could have the least comfort in walking till this was done. But a feeling of discontent in our minds is just like that thorn in the foot, or that stone in the shoe. It will take away from us all the comfort we might have, as we go on in the walk of our daily duties.

And if we wish to have any comfort ourselves, in what we have to do, we must get rid of this feeling of discontent from our own minds. A discontented person can have no comfort in anything.

Our first illustration may be called, 'The fable of the discontented bittern'.

The bittern is a large bird with a long neck and long legs that lives in swamps. The fable says that a bittern was discontented with his condition. He had got tired of living in swamps, and eating frogs

and worms and all sorts of reptiles. He wanted to live in the orchard like a robin, and be a favourite with everybody. 'I guess bitterns can sing as well as robins,' he said to himself one day, 'and I have no notion of being confined to a marsh, and catching fever and ague all my days.' So he started for the orchard, partly flying and running as fast as he could go. When he got there he began at once to build him a nest, like the robin, on the branch of an apple tree. The next day, as he was busy with this work, a farmer from a cottage near by saw him. He got his gun and shot him. The shot did not kill him, but it broke his wing. Then he was glad to hobble back to his old home in the swamp, and to eating frogs and worms again. His discontent had taken away all his comfort. But the lesson he learned that day took away his discontent, and made him satisfied that the position which God had chosen for him was better than any that he could choose for himself.

Here is a short story about a good bishop who had learned to mind this warning about discontent, and the comfort which it gave him.

This good man had passed through many great trials; but he was never heard to complain in passing through them. He was always contented and cheerful. An intimate friend of his, who had often admired his calm, happy temper, and who felt as if he would like very much to imitate his example, asked him one day if he would tell him the secret of the quiet, contented spirit which he always had.

'Yes,' said the bishop, 'I will gladly tell you my secret. It consists in nothing more than making a right use of my eyes.'

'Please tell me what you mean by this.'

'Certainly,' said the bishop, 'I mean just this. When I meet with any trial I first of all look up to heaven, and remember that my chief business in life is to get there. Then I look down upon the earth, and think how small a space I shall need in it when I die and come to be buried; and then I look round in the world, and think how many people there are who have more cause to be unhappy than I have. And in this way I learn the Bible lesson—"Be content with such things as ye have".'

**II. The Second Reason why we Ought to Mind this is 'for the Comfort of Others'.**—The Apostle Paul teaches us that our duty as Christians is—'not to please ourselves, but to please our neighbours, for their good to edification' (Rom. xv. 1, 2). This means that we are to try and please those about us, not by doing anything that is wrong, but by setting them a good example, and helping them on in the way to heaven. But there is no better way in which we can do this than by first learning the lesson of contentment ourselves, and then by our example helping others to learn it too.

Suppose that you sit down some afternoon to study your school lesson for the next morning. Outside of the house, under the window of the room in which you are studying, a cross, ill-natured dog is sitting. He is yelling and howling and barking all the time.

Would that be any help, or comfort, to you in studying your lesson? Not at all. On the contrary it would be such a trouble and discomfort to you that you would be ready to shut up your book and say, 'Well, I must drive away that noisy dog, or I never can learn my lesson'.

And then suppose that there was a tree near the window of the room in which you were studying, and suppose that a little bird should perch himself on one of the branches of the tree, and should warble forth his sweet songs; what a comfort that would be to you! You would feel that the little fellow was a real help to you in learning your lessons. Now, if we give way to an ugly discontented spirit, then, like the barking dog under the window, we shall only be a plague and a trial to those about us. But if we learn the lesson of contentment, and have a quiet, gentle spirit, then like the singing bird we shall be real comforts to our friends, and they will be always glad to have us near them.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, used to say, 'I dare no more fret, than curse or swear'. A friend of his, who was intimately connected with him for a large portion of his life, in speaking of him after his death, said, 'I never saw him fretful or discontented under any of his trials. And to be in the company of persons of this spirit always occasioned him great discomfort and trouble. He said one day, "To have persons around me, murmuring and fretting at everything that happens, is like tearing the flesh from my bones. I know that God sits upon His throne ruling all things. With this thought in my mind, and the grace of God in my heart, I may well learn "To be content with such things as I have".' Good Mr. Wesley was minding the Bible warning against discontent when he used these words, and was setting a good example for us all to follow. What a blessed thing it would be if all Christians would try to follow his example.

**III. The Third Reason why we Should Mind this Warning is 'to Please God'.**—No trials can ever come upon us in this world without God's knowledge and consent. He is so wise that He never makes a mistake about our trials, and He is so good that He never lets any trouble come upon us, but what He knows will be for the best.

And when we try to be patient and contented under our trials, because we know that God orders or permits them, this will be pleasing to Him.

We will close our sermon with one other illustration outside of the Bible. We may call it, 'satisfied with the best'.

'I was going down town in a Fourth Avenue car one day,' says a New York merchant, 'when I heard somebody cry out, "Holloa, Mr. Conductor, please stop your car a moment; I can't run very fast". The car stopped, and presently there hobbled into it a little lame boy, about ten or twelve years old. I saw from the nice clothes he wore that he was the son of wealthy parents; but oh! his face told such a tale of silent suffering! and yet he was bright and

cheerful. He put his little crutch behind him, and placing his poor withered limb in a more easy position, he began to look round at his fellow passengers. A happy smile played over his pale face, and he seemed to take notice of everything. Presently I got a seat next to him, and as he looked around him I heard him humming in a low tone the words of the hymn—"Hark, I hear an angel sing."

Then I had a little talk with him, and found that he knew and loved the Saviour, and it was *this* which made him so contented and cheerful. He told me he was born with this withered limb, and that the doctor said it never would be any better.

"Well, my dear boy," I said, "under these circumstances, how can you be so happy and cheerful?" His reply was, "Jesus, my Saviour, has sent this trial

for me to bear. Father tells me He would not have sent it, unless He knew it would be best for me. And don't you think, sir, that I ought to be satisfied with the best?" This touched my heart, and brought tears to my eyes. I was just going to get out of the car then. So I shook hands with the little fellow, and thanked him for the lesson he had taught me, which I told him I should never forget as long as I lived.'

Now this little boy had learned and was practising the Bible warning against discontent. And we see how well his example illustrates each of the three reasons for minding this warning of which we have been speaking. *It brought comfort to himself—it gave comfort to others—and was pleasing to God.*—RICHARD NEWTON, *Bible Warnings: Addresses to Children*, p. 285.



# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## A MISSIONARY ADDRESS

'Be ye doers of the word.'—JAMES I. 22.

*Introduction.*—Suppose a knife could see and think—one day its master sends it to the grindstone. What for? Perhaps it would think, 'to be brushed by machinery and see lovely fireworks!' But, really, *to be sharpened up.* Why do we come to a missionary meeting or service? To hear stories? sing hymns? have a little excitement? Yes, perhaps, but something more—to be sharpened up and made better workers! Think—

### I. What the Work is.

1. *Very great.*—Three-quarters of the world, say 750 millions of people, to be made Christians. Take 12 days and 11 nights to count 1 million at one a second, and no time for eating, drinking, or sleeping! Take 25 years, day and night, to count 750 millions, and all of these need to be spoken to and taught. 'Can't do it,' but our Captain has told us to (Mark xvi. 15). [*Illus.*: Duke of Wellington to officer who said something could not be done. 'Can't be done, sir! It's in the order book, so it can be done, and it shall be.']

2. *Terrible need.*—What are all these doing without Christ? [Illustrate cruelty and degradation of the heathen by anecdotes.]

### II. How can we Help.

Missionaries are sent out—perhaps we may not be able to go ourselves—at any rate not yet. Still—

#### 1. We can pray for missionaries.

See how St. Paul—the great missionary—was helped by prayers. [Picture out from 2 Cor. i. 8-11.] So with others—one missionary saved from a bear, and found, when he got home, that a little boy had been praying for him. 'O God, save Mr. — from the bears.'

#### 2. We can work for missionaries.

May be small, but the smallest can do something. Missionary boxes. The pleasure of giving. A great deal of money spent on sweets and nice things to eat, why not give a farthing out of every penny to missions? God gives us money to use for the best—not all for self. Would not like to be cannibals, but if we eat the money which should feed missionaries, it is very much like eating missionaries.

#### 3. We can be missionaries.

Always take more interest in work of which we know something—a tailor, e.g. takes more interest in tailoring than in shoemaking. If not full missionaries we can be missionary apprentices. [*Illus.*: Some child near, never comes to church or Sunday-school—or perhaps some grown person. Cannot you

ask them to come, and help to bring them? Perhaps some blind person, or old person who cannot read; cannot you find half an hour to read a chapter or some hymns to them?] Plenty of missionary work for all if only we are willing to undertake it, and nothing like being missionaries for giving us an interest in missions.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 94.

## SOME GENTLE DEEDS

'Gentle—easy to be entreated'.—JAMES III. 17.

It is said of the things done by Jesus that if they should be written every one, the world itself could not contain the books they should fill.

It is the same with deeds done by those who are like Jesus. They can never all be told. They are being done every day, every hour of the day, and in every country. Only one here, another there, is ever heard of. I am going to tell of two or three which I have read about or known myself.

I. It was a gentle deed which Rahab did hundreds of years ago in Jericho. She saved the lives of two servants of God. Rahab was a poor heathen woman. She had neither Bible nor church to tell her what to do. No prophet had ever told her of God. She only knew of Him by the talk of travellers, and by the rumours of the mighty works He had done for the children of Israel. What she knew of God, therefore, was a mere tiny spark of light, which any puff of wind might blow out. But she loved this light. She took it for her guide. And in the way it pointed out she walked.

One day God sent the two servants I have spoken of unto her house for shelter. They had come to see the land; and the king of Jericho was angry, and wanted to kill them. And he sent to Rahab, and said, 'Give these men up to me that I may kill them, for they are come to spy out our land'. But Rahab knew, by the light which God had kindled in her soul, that they were sent by God. And she said to herself, 'I will obey God rather than the king of Jericho'. So she hid the men in the roof of her house among stalks of flax which were heaped up there. Then, when night fell, she let them down by a cord from a window that looked over the wall of the city. 'Flee for your lives,' she said, 'flee to the mountains, and remain there three days, and you shall be safe.' So the men fled, as she told them, up to the mountains, and, hiding there three days, they escaped.

It was God who gave her this chance of serving Him by doing this good deed. And He also gave her the wisdom and the heart to do it well. That which she could do, she did. That is her praise to this day.

II. There is still living, in an English village, a venerable man who had spent his days in preaching the Gospel and doing other Christian works. When he came first to this village he found every summer, about the same time, that many of the people sickened, and some died. Of those who died, the greatest number were children. It went to his heart to see the grief which these deaths caused—mothers crying for the children, and children for the mothers who had died. At last God put the thought into his mind that there was some one evil thing which brought the sickness and the deaths. And looking into all things to find this out, he saw that in the hot months of summer the people had no water to drink except what lay foul and bad in the ditches by the roadside. He said to himself, 'The people are dying for want of pure water'. Now over against that village there is a mountain, and in the sides of this mountain, far up, are springs and streams of the purest water. The minister got workmen and went up to these streams. And across the bed of the largest stream he caused a strong wall to be built, and in this way made a deep lake behind. Then from this lake he caused pipes to be laid all the way to the streets of the village. And the villagers had wholesome water to drink. And they ceased to sicken and die as they had done.

That was a gentle and Christian deed. He brought health to his people, and a happier life into their homes.

III. One of the best and kindest servants of God I have ever known was my beloved friend Margaret. Her life has been one long outflow of gentle deeds. And she has done deeds which were brave as well as good, which needed courage and strength as well as kindness to do. It is one of these—one out of many—I am about to tell.

In the city where her home was is a district which is called 'the woods'. And in the heart of that district was an evil house, dark and dismal to look at, in which thieves and drunkards and other evil people lived, and which the neighbours in the district had named 'the den'.

One winter's day a simple country girl, not yet eighteen, in search of work, knocked at the door of this house. Her mother and she had seen in the newspaper that work was to be had in this house. And at the door, when it was opened, she asked for work. 'Yes!' said the master of the house; 'if you will stay here you shall have work.' But it was a very wicked man who said this, and it was very wicked work he intended her to do. He was like the wolf who met little Red Riding Hood; and this was a girl like Red Riding Hood herself.

Now on that same day it came to the ears of my friend Margaret that this guileless country girl had been entrapped into the den. She knew the wickedness of the evil man who was its master, and of the thieves and vile people who lived with him in his house. She knew also that this poor girl would never more get back to her home unless she could be got out of the den at once.

It was winter weather, as I have said. The air was thick with fog, the streets deep in slush. But Margaret, having first put herself in God's hand by prayer, set out and knocked at the door of the den. 'Could she see the girl who had come up from the country?' 'There was no such person there,' she was told. 'Could she see the master?' 'He had gone from home.' But these were lies which she had been told. She went to the police office, to magistrates, to ministers, to kind-hearted citizens. No one seemed able to help her. Two days in the bitter winter weather she toiled, going from street to street, from door to door, before she found the helper who cared to help. But this helper at last she found. And before the third day closed she had rescued the innocent country girl from the den of evil; had got work for her which she could do at her mother's side; and was with her in the late train on the way back to the village home, which, but for Margaret, she never would have seen again.

IV. The other day a poor man was brought—crushed by machinery—into a Manchester hospital. To save his life his leg had to be taken off. But when this was done, the blood rushed out so quickly that there was almost no life left in him. And the doctors said he had not strength to get better. There was but one chance for him. If new blood could be poured into his body he might still live. One of the students there said, 'Let blood be taken from me'. And blood was taken from him and made to pass into the body of the dying man. And the man recovered his strength and he lived. It was a great gift which this student made to the poor stranger. It was a gift of life. He had nobleness and strength to do this very thing. It was, in the best sense, a gentle deed. That is his praise for evermore for this deed, whatever else his life may bring forth.

V. A young mason, many years ago, had his hand crushed by a stone, and went to the Glasgow Infirmary to have it dressed. A student, unlike the one I told you of—an ungentle student—tore off the bandages hastily. That is a great cruelty when the hand is sore with open wounds. The pain was worse than having the hand crushed at first. And though the young lad kept down his crying when he was with the doctor, he no sooner got out than he turned into a court and sat on some steps inside where he could be out of sight, and burst into sobs. But on that stair dwelt a very gentle lady. She heard the sobbing and came down to see the sufferer. Then she brought him into her house, spoke kindly to him—like a mother—made some tea for him, and told him to come to her every day before he went to have his hand dressed. And day by day this mother-hearted lady soaked the bandages in warm water and made them easy to come off. And this she did to this perfect stranger till the hand was well. Perhaps it does not seem a very great thing to do, but it was a very kind thing. And it was all she was able to do. She did what she could. And the young mason never forgot her kindness. He became a life-long

friend to her. And when she was old and lonely he often visited her and his visits cheered her till she died.

VI. I knew another doer of gentle deeds, the landlady of a country inn. She was very simple. Although she was the mother of grown-up sons and daughters, it was like listening to a baby to hear her speak. Almost the only words which passed her lips were, 'Aye, aye,' and 'No, no'. But she had a kind and motherly heart. Out of that came all the gentle deeds she did. One of these I will tell.

On the other side of the street from her inn lived a poor girl, a weaver, who had neither father nor mother, nor friend nor relative in the wide world. This girl was laid down by fever, and had a long and weary illness after. At first the neighbours were very kind. They lit her fire, tidied up her room, prepared her food, and made her bed. But weeks and months passed, and Ann was no better. And by and by the neighbours got weary of this well-doing. First one, then another, at last all except one forgot to visit poor Ann, or even to ask how she was getting on. This unforgetting one was the kind mistress of the little inn. Every day, as the clock struck four, this simple Christian woman might be seen coming out of her door with a small covered tray. Wet or dry, snow or sunshine, it was all the same. At the exact hour the lonesome Ann heard the welcome footstep on the stair, saw the latch lifted, and the gentle neighbour coming in with a pleasant smile on her face, and a large cup of hot tea and a buttered roll in her hand. She would have died but for this that her neighbour did. Many a day her only food was the tea and roll. And it was not always easy for this kind heart to do what she did. It was not easy to leave her house, which was often crowded with country people. But always she fulfilled her task of mercy. She did it cheerfully. She did it till Ann was able to come and thank her. That was her praise in God's sight.

VII. Yet one other gentle deed comes into my memory out of a story of school life. It was a school of black children in Jamaica. A friend of my own was master. He had made a law that every lie told in the school should be punished by seven strokes on the palm with a strap. One day Lottie Paul told a lie, and was called up to receive the seven strokes. Lottie was a poor little thing, and pain was terrible to her. But the master must enforce his law. Untruth is a very evil thing in a school, or in a child's life. So Lottie had to hold out her hand and receive the seven strokes. But her cry of pain when she had received the first went to the master's heart. He could not go on with her punishment. He could not pass by her sin. And this is what he did. He looked to the forms on which the boys were seated, and asked, 'Is there any boy will bear the rest of Lottie's punishment?' And as soon as the words were out of his lips, up started a bright little fellow called Jim, and said, 'Please, sir, I will!' And he stepped from his seat, stepped up to the desk and received, without a cry, the six remaining strokes.

What moved this brave boy to bear Lottie's punishment? It was the gentle heart. And it was the vision of a heart gentler still, but gentle with the same kind of gentleness which filled the master's eyes with tears that day, and made him close his books, and bring his scholars round about his desk, and tell them of the Gentle One, who long ago bore the punishment of us all.

It is pleasant to tell of gentle deeds. It is far more pleasant to be able to do them. But it is delightful to know that Christ the Lord is helping people every day to do them. And every day He is sending chances of doing them to our very doors. And the gentle deeds He gives us the chance of doing are not high and difficult things, which only great people and strong people can do, but humble, homely, little things which boys and girls, and even little children can do.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 23.

### LET US PRAY

'Pray one for another.'—JAMES V. 16.

We do pray for one another when we kneel at our bedsides at night; but perhaps we do not pray for one another as much as we might, or as well as we might; and we want to help one another to 'pray one for another'.

But what does it mean?

I. It means, I think, that we should **Pray for one Another by Name**. If we say 'God bless everybody,' it means very little: if we pray for each other by name, it means much more.

Aaron was the High Priest of Israel, and it was his business to pray for the people, and so he wore a breast-plate on his heart, and the breast-plate had the names of the children of Israel upon it, and he prayed for the people by name. A minister I knew had a list of all his people, and he prayed for them by name. The list was a very long one, and it became longer and longer, but he used to pray for some on Monday, and others on Tuesday, and others on the other days of the week, and so he got through his list. That was his breast-plate.

Phyllis was a little friend of ours, about three years old. We made friends one day when she sat upon my shoulder, and watched the pigeons flying in and out of the church steeple, where they had their home. She wanted to hear them, but they were too far off. Suddenly she heard some pigeons quite near where she sat saying, 'T-r-r-r'. And looking down she moved away the moustache to see where the pigeons were. The pigeons inside a man were more interesting than the pigeons on the steeple. After that Phyllis one day said to her auntie, 'Auntie, may I pray for Mr. Wobinson?' 'Certainly, dear,' said her aunt. And from that time every night she prayed, 'God bless Mr. Wobinson'.

It is more than a year since I saw our little Phyllis, but her aunt wrote the other day to say that she still prays every night, 'God bless Mr. Wobinson'. That is the way to pray one for another.



II. It means too, I think, that we should **Pray for Some Special Thing**. If anyone is ill, we should pray that he may get well, or that his pain may be eased, or that he may bear it bravely, or that it may do him good. And if any are on the sea, we should pray that God will watch over them, and bring them safe home.

III. Now why should we pray for one another? Because **It makes us have a Right Feeling towards Others**.

If anyone has been unkind to us, said unkind things, or done unkind acts, we do not feel very pleased with them. We would like to hit them, or say something bitter. But that would not be right. What are we to do? Let us pray for them. Jesus said, 'Pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you'. That means we should pray for those who treat us badly. Then all the hot feeling passes away, and we think of them as brothers and sisters.

Then too *we can feel right towards God*. Leonardo da Vinci was a great painter. One of his paintings is of 'The Last Supper'. Jesus is seated

at a table, and the disciples are seated on either side of Him. Da Vinci had quarrelled with a friend, and he determined to put his friend into the picture. So he made the face of his friend do duty for the face of Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus with a kiss, and he made the face of Judas as ugly and as evil as he could. Then Da Vinci had to paint the face of Jesus. He tried again and again, but he found he could not put all the purity and sweetness into that face that it should have.

Soon afterwards he made it up with his friend, and then he painted out the face of Judas, and put another face in. And then he had a sweet vision of Jesus, and painted His face beautifully.

IV. Then, **Praying for Each Other is the Easiest Way of Doing Good**. We cannot always give money to people; we cannot nurse them when they are sick; we cannot help them when they are in trouble; but we can always pray one for another; and God will hear our prayers, and bless those for whom we pray. —W. VENIS ROBINSON, *Sunbeams for Sundays*, p. 154.

# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

## LIVING STONES

I PETER II. 4, 5.

BENEATH one of the hills on which Jerusalem stands, is a vast cavern hewn in the rock. This cavern was the quarry from which were cut out the huge foundation-stones for the Temple. In it are found great blocks partly cut out, with the marks of the mason's chisel as fresh on them as if King Solomon's or King Herod's stonemasons had been at work on them only yesterday. What does this mean? It means that those stones were intended to be used in building God's Temple; but it was found they were not wanted; there were enough without them. There was no room for them; and so there they lie in the dark cave to this day.

Now, only fancy that one of those stones had been *alive*, and could have thought, and spoken, and chosen for itself whether it would be built into God's Temple or not. Suppose that stone had said to the masons, 'It is of no use to go on cutting and chipping; I don't wish to be in the Temple. Here I am, and here you may leave me. I shall be wanted some day for a palace, or a castle, or a bridge, and then they will come and take me out into the sunshine. I am in no hurry.' Would you not have said, 'O foolish, ungrateful wicked stone! You are rightly punished by being left there in the dark for ever?'

Well, but take care you are not like those stones. The Apostle Peter speaks about '*living stones*'. He says:—

'To whom coming (that is, to the Lord Jesus) as unto a living stone . . . chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual temple.'—I Peter II. 4, 5.

In this text, '*a spiritual house*' means a temple for God; not a church or chapel built of stone and wood, but a church made up of people—true Christians—in whose hearts God has promised to dwell. And by '*lively*' is meant, not cheerful and frolicsome, but *living*. (And so in the *revised version* we read '*living*'.) The Lord Jesus Christ is compared to '*a living stone*'—the chief foundation-stone (vv. 6, 7); and all true Christians are compared to *living stones* built on Him, to make part of God's living Temple. If you wish to know more about this living Temple read Isaiah LXVI. 1, 2; John XIV. 23; 1 Corinthians II. 16, 17; Ephesians II. 19-22.

You remember that our Saviour gave to Simon his name '*Peter*', or '*Cephas*', which means '*a stone*', and said to him, 'On this rock will I build My church'. No doubt Peter thought a great deal about his name, and the meaning of it, and about rocks and

stones. And so it is no wonder that he compared the Lord Jesus to a '*living stone*', and Christians to '*living stones*' built on Him to make part of God's Temple.

Now, in what way are you to be one of these '*living stones*'? St. Peter says, 'unto whom coming'. That is it. All depends on *coming* to the Lord Jesus; asking Him to be your Saviour, and yielding and trusting yourself to Him. The stones in the quarry, when the masons had finished hewing and shaping them, had to be hauled with ropes and moved on rollers, and hoisted with pulleys, and so laid in their appointed place in the Temple, because they were not '*living stones*'. But the '*living stones*' must *come*. You cannot be *dragged* to Christ, or *carried* to Him, whether you will or no. You must come.

Teachers, and parents, and ministers, are like God's masons, seeking to prepare you for a place in God's Temple. Every lesson taught you, every hymn and text you learn, every service in which you join, leaves its *chisel-mark*—a mark on your heart. There they are, those marks; some so deep that you can hardly forget them; some so tiny that only God's eye can see them. But all will be vain and thrown away unless you *come*. You must come of your own free will; and yet it must be by God's grace, and help, and teaching. How can this be? Because when God gives us His Holy Spirit, He works in us 'both to will and to do'. This is what we pray for in one of our hymns—

Make us willing to be Thine.  
—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 170.

## IMITATE THE LORD JESUS

I PETER II. 21.

THE Lord Jesus is a Saviour to trust, a Pattern to follow, a Friend to love, and a Master to serve. These are three steep steps for *Tiny Folks*. Do well, suffer for it, and be patient. Only Jesus can help us do this. This verse shows us Jesus as our Pattern. Example is better than precept. The Lord Jesus is our

I. Example of Love and Sympathy. Perfect Saviour.

II. Example of Loyalty and Obedience. Perfect Man.

III. Example of Life and Service. Perfect Servant. One writer reminds us that in order to follow Jesus fully we must tread in *His steps*, and for this we need *His nature*, *His spirit*, and *His power*, but this threefold grace is given to all who will sincerely follow Him.

Two persons were walking together one very dark night, when one said to the other who knew the road well, 'I shall follow you so as to be right'. He soon fell into a ditch, and accused the other with his fall. The other replied, 'Then you did not follow me *exactly*; for I have kept free'. A side step had caused the fall. There is like danger in following Christ. Let us follow Him fully.—CHARLES EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 55.

### A JEWEL OF PRICE

I PETER III. 4.

A CERTAIN thing is declared in Scripture to be 'in the sight of God of great price'. Everything, you know, *is in God's sight*; that is, God sees and knows all things. Not the tiniest atom in the very heart of the earth, not the faintest twinkle of the farthest star, not a passing smile or frown on your face, or a secret thought in your mind, can be hidden from God. He sees everything, knows everything, foresees everything, forgets nothing. But more than this is meant when a thing is said to be precious *in God's sight*. It means that He takes notice of it, is pleased with it, and wishes us to admire and count it precious.

Things often look very different to us from what they really are. Coloured glass may look like precious stones. Gilded paper or wood may look like gold. Artificial flowers may be so like real ones that at a little distance no one can tell which is which. But God sees things as they really are. When Jesse's sons passed before Samuel, and Eliab was so handsome and tall and strong that Samuel thought surely it must be he whom God had chosen to be king of Israel, the Lord said to Samuel, 'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart' (1 Sam. xvi. 7).

Even outward beauty is God's work, and He means it to be admired: but it is not this which He reckons 'of great price'; and for this reason, among others, that it so quickly perishes. The loveliest flowers soon wither, and all their beauty is gone. The fairest face may in a moment be made unsightly by a blow, or disfigured by disease. The most beautiful landscape may in a few minutes be darkened with tempest or blotted out with fog. The most precious kind of beauty must be inward, not only on the outside; durable, not withering; something which will grow more and more beautiful the older it grows.

Well, what is this precious thing—precious even in God's sight? Silver or gold, pearls or diamonds, rare and curious and costly works of art, such as princes treasure in their palaces? No; none of these things. Nothing of the sort. Something which the poorest peasant or the youngest child may have. And, strange to say, something which no one who really has it can be proud of. It is 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price' (1 Pet. iii. 4). This, you see, is *beauty of mind*, or, as we sometimes say, beauty of

character. St. Peter calls it 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible'. And yet he calls it an 'adorning,' an 'ornament,' which means something beautiful to look at, because, you know, people cannot help showing what sort of temper and spirit they have—haughty or lowly, sour or sweet, cross or gentle, hasty or patient, selfish and spiteful, or generous and forgiving—by their words, and tones, and looks, as well as actions.

A certain statesman had once been a poor lad, but had raised himself by his talents and industry. A rich but vulgar-spirited man, who wished to mortify him, said to him very rudely, 'I remember when you blacked my father's boots!' Instead of losing his temper and answering this insult angrily, he simply said, 'And did I not black them well?' That was beautiful, was it not? That was the 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit'.

And why is such a spirit 'of great price' in God's account? Because it is like the Lord Jesus, of whom the voice from heaven said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. 'Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not.' When the people in a Samaritan village refused to give Him a supper or a night's lodging, His Apostles James and John were so angry that they wished to call down fire from heaven to burn up those rude villagers with their houses. But Jesus 'rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.'—E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 219.

### COURTESY

'Be courteous.'—I PETER III. 8.

BE courteous. What does that mean? Perhaps you will understand it better if I tell you it means, be polite.

What is politeness? Can you tell me? Or what is being polite? Let me try to explain. We often see a road being made, or mended, with flints; these fill up the holes, and the cart wheels don't sink into the ruts or mud. You say it's a good road now, only a little rough. But supposing you go over it with a steam roller and press the flints down, there is a great difference—it's the same road, only you've taken off the roughness.

So the polite man is the one who's had the roughness taken off his manners.

Or again, you take off your boots at night and have them cleaned. They are just the same boots, but how different they look in the morning! How much nicer! You've had the polish put on.

Now being polite means simply having a little polish on our manners. To be polite is just the opposite of being rude. The rude person is the one who never says, 'Please,' when he wants a thing, or 'Thank you,' when he has got it. If you are in a little difficulty he won't trouble to help you out of it. If he is going through a gate with a lady he lets her open it, and doesn't even say 'Thank you,' when he passes through



*first.* If he doesn't like the way you sing, or read, or preach, or if you spell badly, or make a mistake in pronunciation, the rude man will be almost sure to tell you of it; *he* calls that honesty, or sincerity, or plain speaking. We call it rudeness.

But we want to be just the opposite of this—to be polite. And we must remember to be polite to a man himself, not to his pocket, or to his clothes, or to his name. I'll tell you what I mean.

We all travel in a train sometimes, and have our tickets examined before setting off. Now let us suppose we are in a first-class carriage. Here's the collector coming; he opens the door, and says in a very nice way, 'Will you kindly show your ticket, ladies,' or 'gentlemen?' as the case may be. We do so; he says, 'Thank you,' and closes the door gently.

Let us suppose we are now in a second-class compartment. The man opens the door and calls out, 'Tickets, please'. He doesn't say, 'Thank you,' nor close the door quite so gently this time.

Once more we are in a third-class carriage. He opens the door, calls out, 'Tickets,' looks at them, bangs the door, and goes away.

Now if a man behaved like that we should say he was only polite to people's pockets, not to the people themselves. We should be just as polite to third-class people as first-class.

Of course we all know what a half-timer is, one who works half the day only. Don't let us be half-timers in politeness—half our time rude, half our time polite—polite to strangers or people outside our own homes; but impolite, rude, rough at home. Some young men are polite to everybody's sisters but their own, but that is a very poor, mean sort of politeness. Sometimes we meet people in the street, or shops, or in other people's houses, and we think, 'Oh! what nice polite people! What good manners!' Ah! but wait until they get home. In Eastern countries it is considered

proper, if you mean to be polite, to leave your shoes or slippers outside when you go inside a man's door; so people in England think it is proper to leave their manners outside their own doors. They are rude and careless, disobliging to their mothers and sisters; any manners seem good enough for them.

If we, any of us, act like that, let us make a change. They say charity should begin at home, so should politeness, only we must not let it *end* there.

Our mothers and sisters might be rather astonished at first if we suddenly began to be a little polite—to say, 'If you please,' or 'Thank you,' and try to help them a little. But I think they would soon get used to it, and I am sure they would like it.

But people may say, what is the good of being polite? It isn't useful, like being honest, or industrious and punctual. Well it isn't necessary to have sugar in our tea, but I think most of us like it; it seems to make the tea taste nicer—so politeness sweetens our lives.

See, you go home and your mother is mangling. What a noise the wheels make! how they creak and rattle! and it seems hard work, too. You get a little oil and put it to them. It isn't necessary, but it makes them run smoothly and easily. So politeness makes the wheels of life run smoothly and easily.

We are told by Christ to love one another; politeness is love showing itself in trifles.

We are told in the Bible, you know, that Christ went down to Nazareth, and was obedient to Joseph and Mary, and grew in favour with man as well as God—that is to say, they liked Him more the older He grew. Why?

One reason, I am sure, is this; He was gentle and obliging to every one around Him. And so He has taught us all to be polite, or in other words, to be courteous.—R. G. SOANS, *Sermons for the Young*, p. 1.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

## THE WORLD TO BE BURNED UP

'The earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.'—2 PETER III. 10.

FIRE is a good friend, but a terrible enemy. The cry of Fire! is always alarming. Even when mischievous boys imitate the fearful sound, shouting aloud, 'Where! where!' the nerves of the timid are disturbed.

The poet Gray, who wrote the beautiful *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, had a dread of fire which amounted almost to a mania. When he became a student of St. Peter's College, Cambridge, his bedroom was on the second story, and he took it into his head that in case of a conflagration, his escape by the stairway would be cut off, and that he would certainly be burned to death. He therefore had an iron bar fixed by strong arms projecting from the outside of his window, to which a rope could be tied in any emergency, and he could thus descend safely to the ground. This excessive caution led his class-mates to play a practical joke upon him, by thundering at his door, one night, with loud cries of 'Fire! fire!' The excited poet started from his bed, rushed to the window, and slid down the rope, when he was greeted with such shouts of derision that he abandoned St. Peter's College, and made his way to another. The window with the iron arms is still shown to visitors at Cambridge.

A most touching incident in the life of John Wesley is the destruction of his father's house by fire. The venerable clergyman was roused from sleep by the alarm of fire on the street, and not supposing that the danger was in his own dwelling, he opened the bedroom door, and found the hall full of smoke, and the roof ready to fall in. Directing his wife and two daughters to rise and flee for their lives, he burst open the nursery door, where the maid-servant was sleeping with five children. She snatched up the youngest, and calling to the others to follow, she rushed forth into the yard. The three eldest did as they were told, but John, who was only six years old, was not disturbed in his slumbers, and in the universal panic was forgotten.

The rest of the family escaped, some through the windows, others by the garden door, and when all were congratulating themselves that, at least, their lives had been spared, they heard the piercing shrieks of a child, and on looking up, to their horror they saw poor John, who had mounted on a box by the upstairs window, gesticulating with his little arms, and trying to attract their notice.

The distracted father ran to the staircase, but it was so nearly consumed that it was impossible to

ascend. Falling on his knees in utter despair, he commended the soul of his dear child to God.

There was no time to look for a ladder, but one man mounted on the shoulder of another, and just as the boy was safely handed down, the burning roof fell in.

'Come, neighbours!' exclaimed the good clergyman, in transports of joy, 'let us kneel down and thank God! He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go; I am rich enough.'

John Wesley gratefully remembered this escape through life, and years afterwards, when his portrait was painted in gown and bands, he had an emblem of a house in flames put under it, with the well-chosen motto, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?'

The burning of a *single house* is a terrible circumstance, as this interesting incident shows you; but how much more fearful when a *whole town* is laid in ashes.

On the evening of the 2nd of September, 1666, a fire broke out in London, which at first occasioned little alarm; but it spread from roof to roof, and from street to street until two-thirds of the great metropolis had been reduced to ashes, and two hundred thousand people were left without a shelter to cover them.

There was the burning of the grand city of Moscow in 1812, which was destroyed by the Russians to prevent the French from making it their winter-quarters, as they had hoped to do, that they might be ready to conquer the empire of the Czar on the return of summer.

The burning of hundreds and thousands of houses in a single town is an awful occurrence indeed, but there is something yet to happen, and we shall every one of us behold it, which will be infinitely more terrible. St. Peter mentions in the text: '*The earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up*'.

Only think of it! The *whole world* will be destroyed by fire!

As such things *have* happened in other worlds, it is neither improbable nor absurd to say that it *may* be the fate of this earth which we inhabit. Scoffers and sceptics need not argue that this great rock-ribbed ball, covered with earth and water, could not be destroyed. God who made it can do with it what He pleases.

There is no need of forming conjectures as to what its fate will be. The Bible has settled the question. The world will assuredly be burned up.

To guard against dangers from fire, people have sometimes erected what are called 'fire-proof' build-

ings. The merchant has a 'safe' to keep his account-books in; and there are fire companies, with engines, and hook and ladders, which often render very essential service.

The old Greeks and Romans had a sort of insurance, especially on ships; and this system has been brought to much perfection in our time. When, however, the terrible day mentioned in the text shall come, all the fire companies in the world will be of no use, and every insurance agency will be bankrupt. The good Lord has graciously made arrangements for His people, by which they may make their escape. In general terms it might even be correct to say that in the due reception of the ordinances of the Gospel, He bestows on them something which corresponds to an *insurance policy*. I say that this, in general terms, would not be an improper view of the case. It should always be remembered, when such illustrations are used, that the mere fact of our having received Baptism and Confirmation and the Lord's Supper, will not of itself secure our salvation. Even if we allow that the Almighty does thus be-

stow His favour on us, and does grant to us, if you please, a *policy*, this will be utterly worthless unless it be taken care of. Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, it must be our daily effort to live soberly and righteously in this evil world.

In case that one is enveloped in flames, instead of rushing forth into the open air, where the chances of being burned to death will be greatly increased, the safest course is to wrap up in a flannel garment, or a thick bit of carpet, which will soon stifle the fire. Is there any covering which will secure us from harm when the world is burned up? Thanks to God's mercy, there is. We may wrap ourselves in the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and be safe.

We *may* do it; but the question is, *Shall* we? Is the Lord Jesus Christ anything to us? Have we cast ourselves on His mercy? and are we striving to serve and please Him in newness of life? If we can say *yes*, then we need not be afraid, even though we know of a surety that this world will very soon be burned up.—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey* p. 19.



# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

## LOVING ONE ANOTHER

'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.'—1 JOHN III. 18.

Now I want you to think of two things about love. It must be *wide*, and it must be *unselfish*.

I. It must be *wide*. I don't call that true Christian love which dotes on some one beloved friend, and does not care at all for anybody else. That is not the least bit like the love of Jesus. A loving child will be loving to all, as He was. I don't mean that you can help liking one better than another, of course. But there will be no making others feel that you don't care for them. You must love some best, but you will have gentleness, kindness, friendliness to spare for all. You will like to make all others happy, if you can, and you will hate everything which annoys and teases another. In short, you will treat others just as you would like to be treated yourself. Now, suppose some day a number of you are going home from school together along the [*Here name a road*] road, and amongst you is a little timid boy or girl, and the big ones try to frighten him, and run after him, and pretend to be going to hurt him, or tease him, and make fun of him, because he is little and timid, is that like what is meant by love? Is that doing to others as you would be done by? But I will go further, and say that true love will not only be kind and thoughtful towards other people, or other children, but it will be kind and thoughtful even to dumb creatures. A loving heart cannot bear to see anything suffer, and cruelty towards animals, or carelessness as to their suffering, is a sure sign that there is little real love in the heart. True love, you see, is very *wide*.

II. It is also very *unselfish*. It will give up something, sacrifice self, for others. Think once more about going home from school. If you found some little child was very tired or ill, and wanted help, while you were very eager to get home, looking forward to some amusement perhaps, and if you were to give up your wish to get home quickly, and were to stay and help the poor child, taking it quietly home before thinking of your own pleasure, I should call that unselfish love. I have heard of children who, when asked to go on an errand, or to fetch some water for some poor sick neighbour, always expected to be paid for it. I don't call that unselfish love.

Now I will tell you two stories of love, showing how unselfish a thing true love is.

Two little boys at Bristol a short time ago, one of them six years old and the other three, rambled more than three miles from the city one cold wet evening,

and night coming on, they lost their way, and being very tired went into a potato-field and lay down to sleep in one of the furrows. But it was so cold that the elder one took off all his clothes except his shirt and socks to make a bed for his little friend, and so saved his life, himself dying of the cold soon after they were found in the morning. We know of One, children, who made Himself poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich. I think that little boy did something of the sort too, though I don't suppose he thought of it, and perhaps he may one day hear with great surprise his Saviour say, 'I was naked, and ye clothed Me'. For you know He says, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me'.

My second story is this. There were seven boys in a boat at Forres in Scotland, and it was upset some way from shore. One only, a boy of thirteen, could swim, so while the others clung to the bottom of the boat he swam backwards and forwards from the boat to the shore, taking one with him each time, till he had saved five in this way. He was then dreadfully tired, but there was one still left holding on to the boat, so he plunged in again to try to save him. But alas! he was too much exhausted, and sank before he could get to him. The sixth one was saved by some men who happened to come by, so the little hero was the only one drowned. Was not his love *unselfish*? We know of One who gave His life for us. I think that brave boy did something like this in his own boyish way.

Now, when you want to feel and know what love is, the best way is to think of the love of Jesus. Oh! how wide and how unselfish His love is! Say to yourself often, 'Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for Me,' and then pray God that your love may be a little like His.—BISHOP WALSHAM HOW, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 120.

## LOVE

'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.'—1 JOHN IV. 7.

John.—'The disciple whom Jesus loved.' His old age—used to be carried into church—no sermon—only one message, 'Little children, love one another.'

I. What it Means to Love one Another. Cf. III. 18.

Contrast with *false* love 'in word and tongue'.

True love is in *deed*, and in *truth*.

Cf. Judas who kissed, and John who loved.

May illustrate by story of King Lear.

II. Why we Ought to Love one Another.

1. Should copy our Father, and 'God is Love'.

Can you remember where to find that text? Very easy. Comes *twice* in John's *first* Epistle, both times in *fourth* chapter, once in *eighth*, and once in *sixteenth* verse. Can't forget it if you know your *two* tables.

Twice one is two,  
Twice two is four,  
Twice four is eight,  
Twice eight is sixteen.

2. We are brothers.

3. God so loved us.

Enlarge and illustrate.

III. How we may Learn to Love one Another.—

So hard to love some people! Can't pump up love all at once. How make dry pump draw? Pour water down it. So begin by doing little loving actions—then love begins to come—*or*—creeping plant may cover house, but begins on a stick.

Try to think loving thoughts—that will lead to kind acts, and so on more and more.

Ask God to help.

IV. Results.

1. Heaven on earth. Cf. text, 'Knoweth God,' and God is in heaven—so know heaven, and have the joy of heaven.

2. Those who love are loved.

3. Make us alive—*really* alive.—1 John iii. 14. [Frozen traveller—finds another more frozen—pities him—tries to warm him—so saves his own life too.] [Story of Abou Ben Adhem in Leigh Hunt's Poems.]

Let us try this week—children fond of new games. See how many kind things you can do each day—add them up—see which can do most. So may help one another, and learn how to be more like God.—C. A. GOODHART, *Hints and Outlines for Children's Services*, p. 43.

# THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

## THE COMMON SALVATION

JUDE 3.

THERE was a boy in Cromarty once called Hugh Miller. He was an apprentice mason, and was taken by his master to work in a quarry. One day he happened to see a little round rough stone on the ground, and he took his hammer and split it into two. To his surprise and joy he beheld inside a picture of the bones of a tiny fish, and a shadow of the very fish itself. It had once been a real fish, and this stone was its tomb. Once it lived and swam like other fish in some stream. And then, on an evil day, it was wrapped round by dust of lime, and shut in until the moment, hundreds, perhaps thousands of years after, when the Cromarty boy brought it out again into the light, its flesh all wasted away, its bones turned into stone, and only a shadow of its form remaining.

The boy felt as if he had suddenly passed into fairy land. He could not have been more astonished if he had found a king's palace. Here was a rough-looking pebble at his feet, and yet inside of it was this picture of the fish, silently telling the story of its life and death.

Now it is to a little heap of pebbles like that I should liken this Epistle of Jude, which we have read for our lesson to-day. It is a rough, hard to read, hard to understand part of the New Testament. It is not easy reading for grown-up people. It is far from easy reading to you; but it has many beautiful sayings in it. It has single verses which have been a comfort to the people of God ever since they were written. And it has one saying which even children should be able to understand. It is a saying in the verse in which Jude declares that he had given all diligence to write unto them of the Common Salvation.

'The Common Salvation'—that is the saying which a child may understand, and in which I wish to help you to be glad. It lies in the heart of this third verse as beautiful, as great a miracle, as the picture which Hugh Miller found in the heart of his pebble. And it has a far finer story to tell.

It tells the story of the good thing which Jesus brought down from heaven. And what it tells concerning that good thing is that it is 'common'—'the common salvation'. Will you try to understand what is meant when a good thing like salvation is described as common? Sometimes on the summer evenings I am so fortunate as to meet you walking like myself on the moor. Did you ever think of asking why the moor is called 'the common'? It is

because it is common property. It is ground that belongs to everybody. All the people of the town have the use of it, to walk on, as if it were their own; and the poor cottagers living around the edge of it may bring their cows and donkeys, their sheep and geese, to feed on it. It is common to us all.

In the same way is this good thing which has come down from heaven common to us all. It is the common salvation; it is common to rich and poor, to black people and white. It is the one same salvation by which everybody who will may be saved. The saved who are now in heaven were saved by it. The saved who are still on the earth have been saved by it. It is salvation for the whole world—for whosoever will have it.

And that is the same thing with saying that Christ is a Saviour for everybody—for every soul who is willing to have Him. He is the common Saviour, the Saviour free to all the world, whom all the world may have. A Saviour not of good people only, nor of bad people only; but of good people and bad people in common: the Saviour in whom bad people will find salvation from their badness, in whom good people will find salvation goodness better than the goodness they have. The common Saviour. The Saviour whom everybody may have and be brought to heaven by. That is what is meant when it is said that the good thing brought down from heaven by Jesus is the common salvation. It is the same thing as is meant in that verse where it is said: 'Let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely'.

Now to help you to understand how good for us it is that there is a common salvation, I will tell you one of the wonderful stories in the Acts of the Apostles. At the time when the things took place which are told in the Acts, a man was in Ethiopia who was very anxious to be saved. The wish to be saved was in him like a great thirst in his heart. But there were two things that stood like a wall in his way. He thought that it was only in Jerusalem salvation was to be found, and that it was only Jews who could find it. Now he was not a Jew, but a far-off Ethiopian. He had money; he had horses and chariots; he had friends; the Queen of Ethiopia was his friend; but he was without salvation. A great sorrow lay upon his soul. At last he resolved to go to Jerusalem and see whether it could not be got. He thought, 'If only I go near the Temple of the Jews I may be admitted among the saved'. But it was not so. He came to Jerusalem. He saw the Temple. He got a Bible. But he was not admitted among the saved. The wall was in Jerusalem too.



Salvation was only for the Jews, he thought; only for white people, and he was a Gentile and black. So with a heavy heart he turned his face to Ethiopia again; and he left Jerusalem, and was on the very road that led to his home. But God was watching over this earnest seeking soul; He sent Philip the Evangelist to him. And Philip told him all the new glad tidings about Christ. He told him that the wall which had divided Jews and Gentiles was broken down; that Christ had died for Ethiopians as well as for Jews, that He had brought down from heaven a salvation that was common, and that if he wished he might have the Saviour and salvation there and then. And there and then this Ethiopian accepted both, and in a river near by he was baptised. And then, with all his sadness gone, and with a heart filled with joy, he continued his journey home.

I want next to make plain to you that it is a very happy thing for yourselves that there is a common salvation. Sunday, I know, is sometimes a hard day for you, especially the part of it you spend in the church. Service and sermon seem long to you, and when you return to your homes you say, 'We did not understand what was said'. That will sometimes happen. What is plain and easy for the grown-up people will often be hard and dark for you.

But do not, for all that, allow yourselves to think that the Saviour is only for those who understand the sermon. He is the Saviour of children all the same as of grown-up people. He is the common Saviour—a Saviour for fathers and mothers, a Saviour for children as well.

I read not long since of a little girl of nine years old into whose heart came this very thought. She said to her mother one Sunday, 'Is Jesus a Saviour for children of nine years old?' 'But why do you ask such a question as that?' the mother said. 'Because our minister was offering salvation to the big people this morning; but he did not offer it to me.'

Christ is a Saviour for nine years old as much as for nineteen or ninety. He was nine years old Himself once. He is the common Saviour. He is the Saviour for people who have grey hairs, and for you who have still the flowing locks of youth. He has salvation for boys and girls of all ages. He has salvation for the baby in its mother's arms. And it is this very thing He meant when He said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not'.

But you will not always be children. Sooner than you can imagine you will be old and grey-haired. And it may come to be, as you rise in years, that you shall be in the good providence of God set over homes where you will have servants under you, or over work-places where you will have work-people to rule.

If such a lot should ever fall to you, I hope that God may give you grace to remember what has been said to you to-day. Do not fall into the evil way of thinking that there is a wall dividing you from the humble people who serve you. Christ has thrown down all such walls for ever. He is the Saviour for

servants as well as for those who employ them. And the salvation He died to bring near is common to them and you, and as free to them as to you. Try even now to think of the servants that do you so many services in your father's house as people for whom Jesus died. For in Christ's kingdom there is no respect of persons, and what He offers to rich and poor alike is a common salvation.—A. MACLEOD, *The Children's Portion*, p. 125.

### THE SPOTTED GARMENT

'Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.'—JUDE 23.

**I. Our Garment.**—In studying the images of the Bible you must remember that in each you have two things: the image and the truth pictured by it. Begin by finding out what exactly the image is apart from the truth it represents. Then let the image be spread out and fixed before your mind's eye. Your eye is pained when you try to find out the exact shape of a shivering leaf, or the picture on a far-off quivering flag; and so your mind is distressed until the whole image grows quite plain to you. When the naked image stands out clearly before your mind, then ask, What is the truth this image brings to me? Moulders take great care lest the mould and the metal in it should run together; and you should be as careful that the image and the truth imaged are not confused in your mind, for that would pain you and spoil the lesson. The moulder wishes his metal to be shaped by the mould, but does not wish the mould to run into his casting; and so we must discover where the image ends and the lesson begins, and thus take the truth—quite clean and complete—out of the mould in which it lies. This is Christ's plan in the parables: He gives the parable by itself, and then its spiritual meaning. Our subject, therefore, raises two questions: What is a spotted garment? and what does it teach? My heart has a covering of bones, a covering of flesh, and a covering of skin. All these are God-given coverings, but my heart has also another, an outer covering of my own adding, which I can change at will. That is my garment. The Christian life may be said to have a heart, a body, and a garment. Your garment is that by which you touch the world and men; it is your way of acting, not in your closet, or in your hidden life before God, but in your open life among men; it signifies not your heart but your habits. Note that word *habit*. It means a lady's riding garment, and also a way of acting. It stands for both our image and the truth imaged. 'The apparel,' the poet says, 'oft proclaims the man.' A man's dress should be in keeping with the man's self. A prince in rags or a bankrupt in rich clothing offends us. And a Christian's garment or outer life should be of a piece with his inner life: the one part should not reproach the other. He was once a ragged prodigal among the swine. The hand of love took off his rags and washed him, and dressed him in beauty not his own. His life is now a Sabbath, a festival, and he has put on holiday ap-

parel. Or as a priest he is clothed in robes of snowy white; but the earth he treads holds many vile things that may easily touch and stain his fair clothing. But as he has a cleansed heart, so he should have clean hands, and be clean every whit down to the very skirts of his garments. As a child of God he must be dressed in the fashion of the family, which is spotless white. The young communicants in the early Church were called candidates, that is, ones clothed in white. They were sometimes literally clothed in white, so that their garment might be a sermon to them. This practice perhaps explains the words, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment' (Rev. iii. 4). All God's children on earth and in heaven wear the same colour. Thus 'a little pilgrim must keep his garments clean'.

**II. The Spots on the Garment.**—What are they? They are made by the flesh, that is, fallen, sinful nature. This garment is only spotted. It has not been dragged in the mire, or steeped in and dyed with the flesh. Such a garment would be a fit image of the life of a reprobate. But Jude speaks to real Christians whose lives are pure in the main, but who, if they do not take care, may easily catch a taint from the wicked world. It would break his heart to find even small scattered spots on their garments.

But how do these dreaded spots come upon the soul's garment? They come from our carelessly touching defiling things. You may touch the wicked world by the eye, the ear, or the lips. Bad books, for instance, have an awful power to defile the soul. Books may leave a foul stain which memory will renew again and again as long as you live. One look ruined the world, and one book may pollute your heart. Do not think that you should 'see life,' and know what is going on in the world. You should know evil as little as possible, for by such knowledge you lose your paradise. Greatly blessed are the children who read none but pure and healthy books, and who shun all unholly sights.

The garment of the soul may also be foully stained through the eyes or the lips. You must close your ears against all words that should not be spoken. You must refuse to listen to oaths and lies, for the spreading spots that come from them may by and by make the soul's garment as foul as the rags beggars leave on the highway.

**III. Our Hatred of the Fleshly Spots.**—It is easy to smile or laugh at these spots, for they often have an amusing side. You may excuse them, or be silent about them. They often appear in people who have some fine qualities, and it is not easy to find the line where liking for fine qualities should yield to hatred of defiling sins. But you are to hate the smallest traces and outskirts of fleshly pollution, and your hatred is to go so far that you will hate

even the whole garment for the sake of the ugly spots that spoil its beauty. Jude does not hate by halves. What vials of wrath he pours upon these sins! His verses fall upon us like thunderbolts. The exceeding hatredfulness of sin as a base blot is set forth some eight or nine times in this short letter. These filthy dreamers defile the flesh (ver. 8): they corrupt themselves, that is, are covered with loathsomeness like lepers (ver. 10): they are spots in the feasts of charity, trees whose fruit withereth—rotten, blasted trunks, emblems of God's judgments (ver. 12): raging waves of the sea, casting up a decaying wreck that taints the air (ver. 13). Jude hates sin because he knows it well. Its inmost essence lies bare to his eye in heaven's light. It is the worst foe of God and man; it cheats us out of happiness; its pleasures are short-lived, its torments enduring; it is a folly, an injury, and a crime; it has lighted the flames of hell; and how can he help hating it? Even its faintest spots defile the white garments of his best beloved, and he must hate it. These strange spots are not like leopard-spots; they are not even skin-deep; they are only on the clothes, and by God's grace you may have them all washed out, if you really hate them. The garment is the outermost part of your outer life, and this holy hatred is the strongest aversion to the least defilement of the outermost part of your outer man. And you are so to hate the spots that you will hate the whole garment which they defile. If a book contains some vile things, you are to fling the whole book away; if a clever companion uses nasty words, you are to quit his company if he won't give them up. Take an ancient and a modern instance. Apuleius was an early Christian, whose garment was deeply dyed with the flesh before his conversion. 'Apuleius,' the historian writes, 'not only shunned the heathen banquets he had formerly shared, but even at a distance he dreaded and shuddered at the mere sight of the house in which the banquets were held.' The spirit of this text entered into a country gentleman, who, upon beginning the Christian life, discovered that his garment was spotted by bad novels and too much wine. He carried out his bad books in armfuls, and made a bonfire of them in his garden.

God has given us an instinctive loathing of impurity. With shuddering we turn away from long-worn rags and from the sow wallowing in the mire. And we have pleasure in cleanliness, and set a high value upon it, believing that—

E'en from the body's purity the mind  
Receives a secret, sympathetic aid.

Now we should carry all these feelings into the region of the soul. Our image suggests many strong reasons for doing so. The fabled Hercules put on by mistake a poisoned garment. As soon as it grew warm the poison entered his body and caused him fearful pain. He tried to tear off the garment, but lo! it had grown into his body. Maddened by the pain he wrenched off his flesh, and so died miserably. But

we need not go to fables for illustrations. Fever entered a house, and the baby died. All its clothes were carefully gathered together and burned. But the doll, laid aside in the drawer, was forgotten. Two years afterwards it was brought out, and again fever seized the child, and it also grew sick and died. That mother had cause to hate the garment spotted by the flesh. Probably Jude has his eye on the plague-stricken garments of the leper, which awakened the utmost horror; and he wishes them to cherish equal horror at the hell-stains upon the garment of the soul. George Vickers, a tailor in the village of Eyam, in Derbyshire, got a box of clothes from London in 1665, the year of the great plague. Viewless plague-spots were upon the clothes, and of the 350 villagers, about 250 died. Vickers removed to another parish, but for years nobody would touch him from fear of infection—they hated even his garment.

You may say that it is very hard to keep your soul's garment unspotted. Yes, but you keep your dress clean. A spot upon it is a distress to you. What a shame to care for the soul as if it were only the body, while you care for the body as if it were the soul. 'The Dairyman's Daughter' went to church one day because she had got a new gown. The text was, 'Be clothed with humility'. The preacher showed the difference between the clothing

of the body and the clothing of the soul. She felt ashamed of her vanity, cast off the filthy rags of her own righteousness, put on the Lord Jesus, and prayerfully did her best to keep her garment unspotted by the flesh. Her bright example has done good to thousands, and her grave has become a place of pilgrimage. A writer tells that he once saw a widow sitting on that gravestone and reading to her girl. The book in her hand was *The Dairyman's Daughter*, and her girl became Queen Victoria.

This is the sum of the whole matter: make sure that you have the true life in your soul, for God never clothes or adorns a spiritual corpse or mummy. He first makes it alive. Receive also the beautiful garment He gives. Be a lover of the beautiful, and believe that nothing is so beautiful as holiness. Hate every spot as men hate the plague, and feel every stain as you feel a wound. Pray that you may be like the daughter of the king, all glorious within, in raiment of needlework, with clothing of wrought gold. And be not discouraged. Jude is not discouraged about the Christians, though they have to keep their garments clean in a world filled with the vilest sins. He knows what the grace of God can do, and so he beautifully closes his letter in holy triumph.—JAMES WELLS, *Bible Images*, p. 33.



# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS GOD

'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.'—REVELATION I. 8.

This being 'Trinity Sunday it is proper for us to dwell upon the nature and attributes of that Almighty One whom it is to be the business of our lives to worship and glorify.

At the close of the Psalms and hymns in the Prayer Book, are what we call *Doxologies*, to be sung after them as a fitting tribute to the Eternal God. Here is one of them:—

To God the Father, Son,  
And Spirit, ever blessed,  
Eternal Three in one,  
All worship be addressed,  
As heretofore  
It was, is now,  
And shall be so  
For evermore.

This verse expresses exactly the truth as taught in Holy Scripture. There is only one God, and yet there are three Persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—each of these Persons being equal in power and glory and in eternal existence.

Our minds are so weak and imperfect that we cannot explain this, neither is there any necessity for our doing so. All that is required of us is to believe in God, as He has revealed Himself to us. Hence in the Catechism, when the question is put to the child who has just recited the Apostles' Creed, 'What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?' the answer is given plainly and distinctly, because there is no doubt on the subject, 'First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the people of God.'

A foolish, self-conceited man was once making mock at the doctrine of the Trinity, and declared it to be so supremely absurd that nothing could be found to illustrate it. At this moment a lighted candle was brought into the room where the company were seated, when a Christian, who had been shocked at his flippant irreverence, quietly remarked, 'Sir, there is a trinity—tallow, wick, and fire, three in one—in that candle. Suppose, now, that the tallow represents one Person of the adorable Trinity, the wick another, and the fire a third. If you will explain the philosophy of how these three unite to produce light I will undertake to explain the doctrine which you pronounce to be so absurd.' The scoffer had nothing more to say.

A still more striking reply was made to a similar

objection by St. Patrick, the patron Saint of Ireland, who plucked a three-leaved clover growing on a single stalk, and held it up before the astonished eyes of one who denied the possibility of there being three Persons in the Godhead.

In discoursing further on the subject I shall confine myself to the single point brought before us in the text—that *our* Lord Jesus Christ *is* God. It seems impossible that anyone could venture to deny this after listening to His own words: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty'.

*Alpha* and *Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and denote the first and the last. It was the custom of the Jewish Rabbins to use the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the whole of anything, from beginning to end.

This is precisely what our adorable Saviour says of Himself in the text. Can He, then, be less than God? Can He who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,' and whose existence reaches *from* everlasting to everlasting, be only a man?

We know that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, because He *has* done and is now doing what far transcends the power of mortals.

I. Our blessed Lord must be God, **Because He Made the World.**—Hear what St. John says, in the opening words of his Gospel, when he is speaking of the Lord Jesus: 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made'. The whole universe—earth, and sea, and sky, and stars, and animals, and plants—everything was made by the Son of God.

Some of you have been present at the beautiful ceremony of laying the corner-stone of a church, when the Bishop, or some clergyman appointed to do it, strikes the great stone with a hammer, after it has been lowered to its place, saying, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I lay the corner-stone of this church'. And so the Lord Jesus Christ, as the mighty Architect of all things, is described in the sublime language of the Bible: 'Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.'

II. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, **Because He Preserves all Things.**—How very soon a fine house, or a beautiful garden, will get out of order, without

constant and careful attention! And, so perfect as are the works of creation, they need a *Preserver*, who shall look after them day and night, and keep things in order and harmony. Hence it is said of our blessed Lord, 'He is before all things, and by *Him* all things consist'. 'He upholdeth all things by the word of His power.'

The myriads of creatures on earth, and in the waters, all turn to Him as the Preserver and Benefactor without whose gracious and tender care they must perish. Empires rise and fall as He pleases; yea, it is He who declares, in the text, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty'.

III. The Lord Jesus Christ is proved to be God not only because He made all things in the beginning, and because He keeps the machinery of the universe in operation, but because when He pleases, He can turn Aside the Ordinary Course of Nature, and Work Miracles.

It is a great comfort to remember that what the Saviour *has* done in past ages, He *can* do now. He is the Almighty One, 'the beginning and the ending; which is, and which was, and which is to come'. We are all helpless sinners, and none but a Saviour who is God can be of any service to us.

Trinity Sunday will have taught us a lesson worth remembering, if it has helped us to sing with the understanding and the heart:—

Eternal praise be given,  
And songs of highest worth,  
By all the hosts of heaven,  
And all the saints on earth,  
To God, supreme confessed,  
To Christ, His only Son,  
And to the Spirit blessed,  
Eternal Three in One.

—JOHN N. NORTON, *Milk and Honey*, p. 161.

## ALPHA AND OMEGA

REVELATION I. 8.

WHAT is God like?

Who would have thought if it had not been told us that He was like the letters in the alphabet?—I am A and Z.

There is a little Chinese toy, which consists of five pieces of wood, shaped so as to fit each other in a variety of ways. And out of those five little bits of wood you can form two or three thousand different shapes; arrange the pieces differently, and you have a different shape.

But although that is a very wonderful toy, it is not to be compared to the alphabet. You can arrange the few letters of the alphabet in thousands upon thousands of different words. And no new word could arise for which, if we use the whole alphabet, we could not find a shape or word to express it.

All that we speak, then, all that we write, all that ever has been written, all that ever will be written,

you will find enclosed in the twenty-six letters of the alphabet.

Now that is why this is the name of God. God says, 'I am like the alphabet; I am its first letter, I am its last letter, and I am all the letters between.'

As all language in all the world in the A, B, C, so all life, all power, and all goodness are to be found in God.

But here we have only this first and last letter.

He is the beginning and end of your life. He is the Maker of it. It is made for His glory. He is the beginning and end of all religion in the life. He is the Author and Finisher.

'Two thoughts come to us here: Where did my religion come from? It came from God. What did I receive my religion for? To serve God.

Now, another way to understand is this: What should be your first thought in the morning? It should be God! What your last thought at night? God!

What should be your first concern in life? To please God. What your last? Have I pleased God?

The happy life is the life that, looking back, sees God in childhood.

And the life that is closing, resting in God, goes home to God.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 88.

## THE WHITE STONE AND THE NEW NAME

'And will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving (i.e. but) he that receiveth it.'—REVELATION II. 17.

I must first tell you something for your comfort before I explain the text. Who is it that is to have the 'white stone'? Who is it? If you look at the line just before my text in the same verse, you will see who it is that is to have the 'white stone'. 'To him that overcometh.' What does that mean?

Perhaps somebody says, 'Then I'm sure I shall not have it; I have not overcome; I have not conquered my temper; I have not conquered my evil habits yet, therefore I'm sure I shall not have it.'

Now it does not mean that. Look at it. It does not say, 'To him who *has* overcome'; but to him who *overcometh*'. There is a great difference. None of us have yet 'overcome'—not one of us—young or old—we have not conquered anything yet; but if we are God's children, we are conquering, though we have not yet conquered. Then God says He will give us a 'white stone'.

Do you think you are conquering a little bit every day, getting the mastery over yourselves?

I heard lately of a master of a school who, once a month, called up every boy to him, and he gave each boy a little bit of paper, and no one saw what was written on the paper but the master and the boy. On that piece of paper was written the fault that the boy was to conquer in the next month. Don't you think that he was a good man? If you had any kind person who would write upon a piece of paper the fault

you were to conquer the next month—do you think a month would be long enough to conquer it in? Try—try!

Then, if you would conquer your fault, whatever it is, you are the person to whom God will give 'the white stone'. You have not 'overcome'—but you are 'overcoming'.

Those who are acquainted with their grammar will understand what I mean when I say it is in the present tense—those who *are* 'overcoming' shall have the 'white stone'. That is for your comfort.

Now we go on to speak about the text. What is it? What is a 'white stone'? I will tell you some persons' different opinions respecting it.

Some people think it means the 'white stone' which the ancient Greeks used to give to the people who conquered in the games played at Olympia—the *gladiatorii ludi*, as they were called. The people used to meet at certain periods to witness racing, boxing, jumping, and a great many other things, and the person who gained the victory had a 'white stone' given him, as a sign that he had done so. Therefore they think it means the prize. I do not think so, for then it would be to him who has 'overcome', whereas it is for him who is 'overcoming'.

Again, other people think it means a sort of ticket that will admit you in at the door by showing it, and that with it you can go in to the banquet—the feast; that therefore it is the ticket of admission to heaven. I don't think that it means that. I do not remember reading anywhere that people have 'white stones' for tickets to go in at feasts.

I will tell you another thing. Amongst the Greeks, when a man was tried for any offence he had committed, if he was found guilty and condemned, they gave to him a black stone; but if he was acquitted—found innocent—then he had a 'white stone'. So that the 'white stone' would signify that he was *pardoned*. I think it means that. That is the best thing. God says that He will give us a 'white stone' to show that we are forgiven.

Let us think on this. We have all the black stone: that is very bad. There is no black-and-white stone—half white and half black. I think some people imagine we may be half forgiven: they say, 'Well, I hope God will forgive me for that fault above all the rest'.

Let me tell you that if God forgives us a little, He forgives us quite. It is all 'white', if it is 'white' at all, never white-and-black; it is all 'white', no spot left.

Christ is that 'stone'; therefore the 'white stone' means Jesus! and the pardon which He gives us when we love Jesus makes our souls 'whiter than the snow,' or the sun.

Now I want you to think how we can get that 'stone'. God gives it. To whom does He give it?

There was once a king of France travelling about the southern part of that country, where was a castle in which were a great many prisoners—persons who had been condemned for their crimes to be sent

thither and work hard, while bound in irons. This king visited the castle. When the news of his intended visit reached the prisoners, they began to think, 'Perhaps the king will pardon me, and let me loose'.

At length the king arrived, and walked amongst them; they all came round him and begged that he would forgive and let them loose. One of the men said, 'Oh, please, your majesty, I never did anything wrong; it was very unjust to put me here; I assure your majesty it is so, do let me go, it's quite a mistake'. Another said, 'Please, your majesty, I know I did wrong; but it was not so bad as people make out; I only did a little wrong. Do let me go.' Another came and said, 'Please, your majesty, I know I did very wrong; but I am not worse than the rest of your majesty's subjects. Do let me go.' Another said, 'Please, your majesty, I know I did very wrong, but then I did so many good things besides. I am sure that I did greater things to serve your majesty than I did offensive things; please let me go.' Another said, 'Please, your majesty, I know I deserve this punishment, and more; but I throw myself upon your majesty's mercy. I am a poor miserable wretch.' Then the king said, 'This is the one I pardon'. He gave him the 'white stone'.

If you want the 'white stone', i.e. if you want God to forgive you all your sins, and for your soul to be 'white' and beautiful, you must humble yourself. You are a poor miserable sinner, and require the 'white stone'.

I have read of an Arab who was travelling the desert of Arabia, when, after travelling a long time—very hungry and thirsty, with nothing to eat or drink—he came to one of those little wells or cisterns in the desert for camels to drink out of, and he found some water; and by the side of the water there was a little blue bag, and he looked at the bag and said, 'Now I have what I want. Surely in this bag there are some dates, some fruit, something for a traveller to eat.' He eagerly grasped the bag, opened it, and exclaimed, 'Oh, it is only pearls!' Ah! 'pearls' were of no use to him then. And so will it be with us. It is not the 'pearls' that we shall one day think of—but it will be of the 'white stone'. Then there will be no 'pearls' worth having.

And now I am going to say a little about 'the new name' written in the 'white stone'. Think of this 'new name'.

What is this 'new name'? Do you remember that it says in the Bible when God loves people very much He changes their name? Can you think of anybody whose name he changed? He changed Abram's name into Abraham, and he changed Sarai's name; He also changed Solomon's name, and do you not remember Daniel's name was changed? and a great many names in the New Testament God changed. Saul's name was changed; and many others.

It shows God loves them. It is like 'a new name' being given when we are adopted into a family. You know when we are taken into a new family, we have



'a new name'. When you are adopted into the family of God, you have 'a new name' given unto you.

You have a Christian name: I don't know all your names; but there are all kinds of them in this church: and whatever your Christian name is—whether John, Henry, Thomas, William, Peter, or whatever it is—you should think it is your 'new name,' and that it is to make you think of becoming a 'new creature'—a child of God—because you have this 'new name'. Will you think of that?

Every thing has something to mark it. There is the cockchafer, which has round wings; the butterfly, which has spotted wings; the hawk, which has a crooked beak. Now what is to mark you? Your 'new name' is to mark you. You have the 'new name'.

It says also of this happy thing—this 'new name'—that 'no one knows it, but he that receiveth it'. If you have not this 'new name,' you will not understand about it. There are some people in this church who do not understand anything at all about what I am saying: they don't love 'the name of Jesus'. Those who do love Jesus will understand it.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### WALKING IN WHITE

'And they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.'  
—REVELATION III. 4.

I WONDER if you can think what is the whitest thing in all the world. Shall we think of some 'white' things? The manna was 'white' which came down from heaven: it was angels' food.

But there is a very beautiful 'white' thing spoken of in the 68th Psalm—let us look at the 14th verse, 'When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon'—that is, Jerusalem. All the houses therein were very 'white,' there being so much white marble there. David loved it very much; and he loved to praise it; and he said, 'It is as white as snow in Salmon'.

If you look at Matthew xxviii. 3, you will read of another 'white' thing. It is a description of an angel, and it says, 'His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow'. And if you look at Acts i. 10, you will see other angels described as 'white,' 'And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men (i.e. angels) stood by them in white apparel'.

But there is something 'whiter' still. Look at Mark ix. 3; when Jesus was transfigured on the top of the mount, it says, 'And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them'.

So that we find the manna was 'white'; angels' robes were 'white'; and Jesus' robe was 'white'; and seven times in the Revelation it says the same thing as my text, that the dress of the saints in heaven is 'white'—that they 'walk with God in white'.

These are some of the 'white' things. It seems as if everything that had to do with heaven is

'white'. But which is the whitest? The whitest is God—the whitest is Christ. But what is the whitest with us? What do you think is the whitest thing—next to God, next to Christ? Shall I tell you? The thing that was the blackest. And what is that? The heart. It was the dirtiest, blackest thing in the world; but God makes it the whitest.

I want you to think, then, that every one who is to 'walk in white' with Christ in heaven, must begin now. I want you to think that we are to 'walk in white' now. What is like 'walking in white' for we must begin now, if we are to 'walk in white' when we die. What does it make you think of when it says, 'walk in white'? I am going to mention four things which I think it means.

I. First, those who 'walk in white' are so very 'clean'. 'White' is so 'clean'. Perhaps you wonder that I should talk about you being 'clean,' but in the Revelation God twice notices that the saints are 'clean': He says they are 'clean and white'. He puts the two together. It is not too little for God to notice that we are 'clean'.

The first thing that must be 'clean' is our heart. Nothing will do but that. I have tried to explain what this is. Every day your heart must be made 'clean' in the blood of Christ, for you daily defile it. But not only your heart, everything must be clean, you must have clean face, clean hands, clean person, clean clothes, clean room, clean drawers, clean everything.

A Christian will wish everything to be 'clean'. Why? Because it looks nice? That is one reason. Because your father, and mother, and friends wish it? That is a good reason. But there is a higher reason by far, because you hope to 'walk in white' in heaven; and therefore you are determined to 'walk in white' now. To be 'clean' is a preparation for heaven. Oh, how 'clean' are they in heaven! Let this be your reason for trying always to be very nicely 'clean,' that you hope to go to heaven, and heaven is so beautifully 'clean'.

You know little things become great if there is a great reason; and common things become heavenly if done to please God. To be 'clean,' is to please God, because He wishes you to 'walk in white' with Him in heaven. That is one thing.

II. Another thing which to 'walk in white' means, is to be very clear, so that you can reflect everything. I must explain to you what I mean by that. When you look at your face in a looking-glass, what you see is called a reflection. The glass reflects you. God wishes, whenever he looks at you, to see a reflection of Himself in you. I have given you, as your subject, that you are to think how you can be like Christ. If you are like Christ you reflect Christ.

Now 'white' reflects most. I am going to tell you something that you do not all know. I will tell you how we see anything. A ray of light comes upon the thing we look at, and then a ray of light comes off the thing to our eye, and makes a picture of it to us. The way you see me, is, the light of the sun falls on

me, that ray falls on your eye, and makes a picture of me to you. A ray is made up of various colours—violet, blue, indigo, orange, red, yellow, and so on. If a thing reflects all the rays it is 'white'. My surplice is 'white'. Therefore 'white' reflects most. We are to be 'white,' because we are to reflect all Christ. Not to be like Christ in one ray, or another ray, but to be all Christ—to be 'white'.

III. Now I am going to mention a third thing, 'white' is very pretty, most beautiful—and why? Because it is so simple. I dare say, when you were a little baby, and were baptised, you had a white frock on. Whit-Sunday was called White-Sunday, because all people who came to be baptised on that Sunday came in white. You are to 'walk in white,' and so you are dressed in it, because it is so beautiful, so simple.

I once knew a little girl who had a great many fine clothes; and, talking to me of one of the joys of heaven, she said, 'In heaven they would not be worried about fine clothes'. How simple! I hope you will always like to be very simple in your dress. If you are asked, 'Why do you like the simplest dress?' say, 'Because it is like heaven'. They do not wear fine things in heaven—they are not wanted there. There is no beauty like simplicity. Anything that is not natural is never really beautiful. True simplicity is always beautiful. Therefore, in heaven they 'walk in white'. Try to be simple in everything, because you hope to 'walk in white' for ever.

IV. 'One more thing. 'White' is a very happy colour. People generally put on 'white' when they are very happy.

In ancient times the great officers and magistrates used to wear 'white,' and the high priests always wore 'white'. One reason was because it was holy, and another because it was happy. People put on 'white' during holidays because it is a happy colour.

The ancient Persians always used to put on 'white' when anybody died, because they thought it a happy thing; but black when any were born, because they thought they were born into a world of trouble. I do not know that they were not the wisest, because to die is a very happy thing.

In Ecclesiastes ix. 7, 8, happiness is represented by 'white' apparel—it reads, 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; For God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white.' Therefore, if we are to be prepared for heaven, we must be happy there.

'Walk in white.' Will you think of the four things we must be to be 'worthy'—to be prepared and fit to go to heaven? We must have a clean heart, and clean everything; We must be clear—be like Christ and reflect Him—be very true: we must be simple, very simple in everything—simple in our tastes, because true simplicity is true beauty; and we must be happy, very happy in the thought that God loves us, and we are going to heaven. This is 'walking in white'.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

## THE DOOR OF THE HEART

REVELATION III. 20.

ONE morning, many years ago, I had to leave home early. It was still dark. East and west, north and south, it was dark. Above me rose the night sky covered with clouds, like some great cathedral roof, all dark—almost black with darkness—except one little chink of deep blue in the east.

On the lower edge of that chink of blue stood the morning star. I remember thinking it was a great sight that solitary star, flaming there within that chink of blue. It looked to me like an angel, standing behind the darkness, knocking at the dark clouds, and saying, 'Break up, ye dark clouds, and let me through, that I may shed my light upon the earth'.

While I was still admiring the great sight the words flashed into my mind: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock'. And instantly I seemed to be walking under a still more solemn sky, and looking at a far greater sight. In the words which came into my mind I saw One greater than an angel, 'the Bright and Morning Star' of God, standing at a door and knocking. In the morning stillness I seemed to hear a voice inviting me to look at this greater sight. 'Behold,' the voice said, 'I stand at the door and knock.' I remembered that these were Christ's own words. And I found myself thinking of Christ, the King of Glory, and thinking of Him in the form of One Who is standing knocking at a door.

And it is this touching figure of our Lord I wish to set before you to-day. I want you to look with me for a little at this great sight of Christ at the door.

I ask myself, I hear you asking: At what door we are to look for the Blessed Jesus standing and knocking?

The answer is: At all doors. At all kinds of doors. At house doors, and shop doors, and school doors, and church doors. At every door which has not opened to let Him in. At every door which shuts in a bad man or naughty child. At the doors of houses where there is no love between father and mother, between brother and sister, between parent and child. At the doors of schools where the scholars are idle, or wicked, or thoughtless. At the doors of work-places, where workers are unfaithful and masters unkind. At the doors of churches where God is not truly worshipped. At the doors of courts of justice where men are unjustly judged. And at the doors of kings' houses where nations are unjustly ruled. At all such doors the Lord Jesus stands and knocks. And besides these, at another door, a very little door, but a very, very precious door, the door that opens into the house within the heart.

When God made the world He built in it many houses. 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' 'The stars are mansions built by God.' The deep sea, and the lofty mountains, and the leafy woods are all mansions built by God. He made houses for beasts, and houses for birds, and houses for fishes. He

made a house for the sea, and a house for the clouds, and for man he made the earth. But among all these houses there is one more precious than the rest, one little, rich, unseen mansion, which He built for Himself, for Himself alone, and in which He desires to dwell. This unseen mansion, this rich, royal house of God, is the heart. It is your heart, my heart, every heart. It is at the door of this house that the Lord Jesus stands and knocks.

Think of it. It is worth thinking about. A house for the Great Creator in the heart of a little child! How fearfully and wonderfully we are made! When you look at the body of another child you might think there is nothing more. The body is the house. Yet the body is only the outer wall, the mere outside of the house. Within this fair outside, in you, in every one, stands the real house. 'Eye hath not seen it.' It lies far in, deep down, where love lies, where dreams live. Your heart is this house. It is at the door of your heart that Jesus knocks. Behold, O child, the gentle Jesus! He stands at the door of your heart, and knocks.

I have said that He made this house for himself. But I have also to say that although He made it for Himself, and desires to dwell in it, He does not always dwell in it. He is often kept standing without. 'Behold,' He says, 'I stand at the door and knock.' At the door! Outside of the door! He has not yet got in through the door! It is Jesus at the outside of the heart-door we have to look at. Jesus kept standing and knocking there to get in! Oh, amazing sight! The great Saviour whose hands were pierced for us, who came with blessings in those very hands to bless us, whose own house the heart is, kept standing without! Shut out, and left to knock there, at the door of His house!

How is it with the children I am addressing to-day? Have you heard Christ knocking? And if you have, have you opened and let Him in?

Children who have let Christ into their hearts are like the beautiful temple King Solomon built, which had its innermost best room set apart for God.

Children who leave Him outside are like the inn at Bethlehem, which had no room for the infant Jesus. But that is an unblest state to have no room for Jesus. To leave Him—the best friend we have—the loving Saviour, outside, knocking at the door, that would be such a sad thing for any child of man to do, and I desire so earnestly that you should not do it that I will take up the rest of the time, which remains to-day, in stating some reasons why you should open your hearts and let Him in.

One reason is, because He will bring heaven with Him into your heart. Young people like you, and some old people as well, find a great difficulty in beginning to be good. They resolve to be good. They try to be good; but always their badness gets the better of them, and they are sad. If they would only admit Jesus into their hearts this difficulty would disappear. He brings goodness with Him into the heart. He brings a new heart, new love, new truth,

new holiness; best of all He brings Himself. Oh, that is goodness and heaven itself to have Jesus in the heart!

A second reason why you should let Jesus into the heart is that He will cast out the bad things which are in the heart. And there are many bad things which need to be cast out—bad thoughts, bad wishes, bad feelings, lies, anger, malice, hatred, envy, selfishness, pride—these should all be cast out. We are told in the history of Jesus that he cast out evil spirits from some Jewish children. There are evil spirits to be cast out from the children of this country too. The Bible tells us about 'plagues of the heart'. The heart of a Christless child is full of plagues; plagues that will be plagues through all eternity if they are not cast out. Jesus is waiting at the door to come in and cast every one of them out. Lift up the door of your heart and let Him in that He may cast out every plague and evil thing in your life.

A third reason why you should let Him in is, that it is easier to let Him in when you are young than after. The door at which He stands knocking grows thicker and harder to open the longer he is kept outside. The knocking comes more faintly every day. Jesus is still there; but the spirit that should hear is growing deaf as it grows old. At last it does not hear at all.

I saw a sad story in the newspapers not long ago. A poor woman lived all alone in a dark cellar. She was very, very poor. But one day the neighbours missed her. They went to the door and listened, and there was no sound. They knocked and got no answer. They knocked again, and still there was no reply. Then they forced the door and went in. She was dead. She was seated on the floor, her body leaning against the wall. There was neither fire, nor furniture, nor bedclothes, nor food in the house. In a great rich city she had died of want. Ah, sad though that was, the way many souls die is sadder still! They shut out Jesus in the days of youth. They keep Him out when they grow old, and then when he comes knocking at the door of the heart with bread of truth, they cannot hear. Their bodies are living; their souls are dead. If you could break open the door of that inner house where the soul is, and see what God sees there, you would find a heart without truth, or love, or faith, or prayer; and in it a soul that has died of want.

Another reason why you should open to Jesus is that He will not always knock. He will not knock after you die. If you die before He is let in, He will remain outside for ever. Eternity will flow on, and over you, for ever; but no hour can come when He will enter. There is no Saviour knocking at the door of any heart in hell.

He may go away from the door before you die, Ephraim had idols and kept Jesus out, and Jesus said, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone'. An awful word! An awful thing to have Jesus say to food and Bibles, and friends, and Providence: 'Let him alone; knock no more'.



I was coming home late one night. The long street was silent. Just as I reached my own door I heard a loud knocking at the far end of the street. I heard it an hour after when I was in bed. Then it stopped. Then I heard quick footsteps tramping along the street. Then all was silent. Just so it is with the knocking of Jesus at the doors of men's hearts. But no ear can hear the departing footsteps of Christ.

Some people are able to tell you when they first heard the knocks of Jesus. These are *first* knocks. But Mr. McCheyne once said to a little girl in Kelso: 'Remember also there are *last* knocks'. When the heart becomes hard and careless, then be afraid. Be afraid lest Christ should knock for the last time. Oh you, at whose hearts He is still knocking; you, whose hearts are still fresh and young; oh, children, in the days of youth, open the doors of your hearts and let the King of Glory in.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 131.

### THE VOICE OF GOD

REVELATION III, 20.

I. ONE of the most wonderful things in our life is that God speaks to us. Although we cannot see Him we can hear His voice. Adam and Eve heard it in the garden, Moses heard it at the hurning bush, the children of Israel heard it in the wilderness.

In an old Jewish book there is a story which helps us to see how great a wonder the voice was to the children of Israel. They were at the foot of Mount Sinai when they heard it. The mountain was covered with smoke. Lightning flashed out of the darkness; great peals of thunder shook the air; the ground trembled; the priests blew terrible blasts through their trumpets; the people were crying out in fear. In the midst of their terror there rose quietly above the roaring of the storm a still, clear sound. It was the voice of God. Everybody heard it. It seemed to come from everywhere. 'It is coming from the south,' cried some; 'It is coming from the north,' cried others. When they turned to the south, they heard it sounding in the north; when they turned to the north, they heard it coming from the south. 'It is in the east!' 'It is in the west!' cried others. When the people turned to the east, they heard it sounding in the west; when they bent their ears to the west, they heard it in the east. As they were turning to every side to hear it, some cried out, 'It is coming down from the sky'. Then they looked upward and as they looked they heard it rising out of the ground. It was everywhere—east and west, above and beneath, behind, before. It is everywhere still. Shepherds hear it in the lone fields when they are watching their flocks by night; sailors hear it when they are keeping their outlook far out at sea; it talks to soldiers on the evening before a battle; it talks next day to those who are lying wounded on the battle-field. I know mothers who hear it as they are rocking their baby's cradle; I have known students who hear it as they read their books. It is to be heard in the songs of birds and the murmur of

bees, and there are friends of mine who tell me they hear it amid the crowds of great cities, in the unending tramp of the weary and the heavy-laden, and in the cries of the little arabs on the street. And always when it is heard it is a wonder. It is like some one speaking to us out of another world.

One good thing in that voice is that it always speaks to us in speech we know; not in speech of foreign lands, or of nations long since dead, or of angels in the sky. It speaks to us in our mother tongue, in the speech of human beings, and for the most part in the speech of the human beings who have loved us and cared for us long. As often as otherwise it speaks to us in words which a mother has used.

That is how it spoke to a young man in San Francisco, of whom I read the other day. It was forty years ago, when San Francisco was a wilder place than it is now. He was then hardly twenty years of age, and he was newly out from Scotland. His mother and he had been great friends; in some things she was more like a sister to him than a mother. Often in the evenings she would sing to him the simple songs she loved, and the songs sank into his heart and became a treasure to him there. He could not go where his mother's songs did not go with him. They were music to him all the way on the long voyage to San Francisco, and they did not forsake him there. A kind young fellow, who had come out two years before, took him in hand to show him the sights of the city. One evening he took him to the door of a gambling saloon; it was a horrible place to look into. Ill-faced men sat at long tables in little groups, drinking, smoking, and playing cards. Nobody seemed to be speaking, yet there was a low murmur of sound floating over the room. 'Come in,' said the guide, 'let us for once try our luck at the cards.' He was about to enter, when there came up into his memory the lines of one of his mother's songs:—

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?

It was as if his mother spoke to him. It was the voice of God in the memory of his mother's song. He thought of the grief to her if she knew of his being present in such a place, or in such company. He took his friend's arm in his own and said, 'Let us leave this place'. A place of that kind was a temptation to him never more.

I do not know anything better worth learning about this voice than the times when it speaks to us. It speaks before and after our deeds. But it is its beforehand speaking we should set ourselves to regard.

In the land of Greece long ago there lived a wise and good man named Socrates. He was one of the first of the wise men who took an interest in young people. In the city of Athens, in which he lived, he went up and down the streets offering his wisdom to all who would hear. The young men loved him, and

liked to be in his company, and often spoke to him of the wonder his wisdom was. But Socrates never thought himself wise. He told them that what he said was only what his good angel, the voice of God in his heart, told him to say. It was always speaking to him. Especially it spoke to him when he was tempted to do evil things, or speak evil words, or neglect duties. It was a voice of warning. And he lived a noble life because he listened to this voice and obeyed it. When it told him not to do a thing he never did it.

But it happened to Socrates as to One who was greater than Socrates. There were evil men in the city who could not bear that he should speak with the voice of God. And they brought him before the judges, and said, 'Either he must give up speaking at the bidding of that voice or die'. But he said, 'To escape death, ye judges and men of Athens, can never be the great object of human beings. The great object is to flee from ba-eness and wickedness. I can die. I cannot cease to speak as my good angel bids me.' So he chose to die. And the judges sent him to prison and to death.

It was noble to die in that way. But there are many who never listen to the voice when it is a voice of warning and speaks beforehand. They are tempted to do some evil thing, or, like Socrates, to leave off some good thing. The voice cries from within, 'Do not leave off the good thing; do not do this evil thing'. They shut their ears. They will not hear. Or there are other voices and other sounds in their hearts which keep them from hearing, and they give way to the evil. And, oh! there comes back to them once more the voice they refused to hear; but it comes back all changed, and not now a voice of warning, but of blaming and remorse.

There is a picture in our Gallery of Art which shows the awful difference of listening to the voice *after* instead of before. It is the picture of a wild heath. A lonesome place it is—no house, no road, no bridge to be seen in it all. There is only the dark, waving grass, the low brushwood in the forest, and behind, the far-stretching heath, black with the shadows of heavy clouds. To the left of the picture a man is running, as if for his life. He is turning half round to see that nobody is pursuing him. A look of horror is in his face, and there, straight before you in the picture, is the cause of his terror. There, under the dark sky, half hidden in the brushwood, is the dead body of a man. The man who is running away is his murderer. He is hearing the voice of God, but it is after instead of before his evil deed. The voice of warning has become a voice of accusing. It is crying to him out of the depth of his soul, 'Where is the living man who came with thee into the heath?' It will go on calling for that man as long as he lives. It will follow him like an avenging angel. In the dark and in the sunlight it will speak to him. He will have rest from that awful voice never and never more.

II. Listen to some further words concerning God's voice.

One of the best things connected with the voice is that when it speaks it is always near at hand. It is not a voice away up in heaven, so that we have to say, Who shall go up and bring it down to us? It is not far away over the sea, so that we have to say, Who shall go over the sea and bring it home to us? It is near to us. It is in our very hearts.

You have been born in a country in which the voice is sounding on every side, in which it speaks in almost everybody you know. It speaks to you in your mother's and your father's words. It speaks to you in the lessons of your school-books, and in the words of your teachers. And what you hear when you enter a church is just the wisdom and music of this voice. And because you have been listening to it since your birth, it is near to you and in your very hearts.

Now, this voice which is sounding everywhere round about you, which seems somehow as if it came down to us from heaven, and yet is all the while in our own hearts, which speaks to you often in the words and tones of your mother, and all the while and in every form is the voice of God—this voice utters its best and sweetest call to us when it comes to us from the lips of the dear Lord who died for us.

And this is what I want to speak to you about now. The voice of God is Christ's voice. What we call the Gospel is just this voice telling us of the Father's love. The Bible is the book of the words which this voice has uttered. The Gospels tell us how children liked to hear His Son.

You remember the words and where it is said by the Saviour: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in'. It is at the door of your hearts He is knocking. He is knocking to see if you will open your hearts, and let Him in to be a voice of God, a good angel to you there. To every one who admits that voice it will be like a pleasant song in the heart, like an angel of God always singing within you of righteousness and of God. It will be always with you: when you lie down at night, when you awake in the morning, when you are happy, when you are sad. Where you go it will go; where you dwell it will dwell.

Like the good angel of Socrates it will warn you when an evil way is near. And if at any time you should come to a difficult place in your life, and do not know which way to turn, it will speak to you and say, 'This is the way, walk you in it'.

In the village of Lilliesden, a few years since, a brother and sister had to bid each other farewell in the afternoon of the day on which their father was buried. He had been a very saintly man, but his saintliness did not pass on to his children. They loved him, but could never feel just as he felt when the things of the soul were spoken about. But now to those two, brother and sister, on this afternoon of the day of their father's burial, when their hearts were tender with sorrow, and they thought back over all they had seen in their father, it seemed as if they

had somehow missed their life, since they had missed feeling as their father did. And they agreed together to ask the Lord to enable them to feel as he did, and to walk in his ways. And they agreed further that whoever first felt the change should come right off and tell the other. More than four years passed before the change they longed for came. And it was to the brother it first came. It was a Sunday evening just like this, near the close of the year. He was listening, as he had listened many a time before, to the minister preaching. And as he listened, without warning of any kind, a new life seemed to rise up in his soul. He felt as if Christ had entered into his life, and was speaking to him from within and comforting him, and stirring him up to come nearer to God. Suddenly he was in a new world. Everything spoke to him of God and of heaven. The change long prayed for had come. The Saviour had come into his heart, and was speaking glad words to him there. He saddled his horse next morning, and rode the thirty miles between his sister's home and his own and told her the joyful news. She saw by his manner that he had found the secret of their father's life. She saw the father's saintliness in everything he did. He was as a voice of God to her. It entered into her heart and became a good angel, singing of God all the day. It made her whole life a sermon for God. And he till he died and she till the last time I heard of her were voices for God, calling on all around them by the simple calling of their daily lives.

And that is the wish my heart is wishing for you this evening. From my heart I wish that not only might the voice of Jesus in the Gospel enter into you, but that you yourselves might become, in a way, by your daily lives, voices of God. John the Baptist was a voice speaking in the wilderness in an evil time. There is not one of you, however young, but may be a voice speaking for God in the time on which your young lives have fallen.

That is the work missionaries abroad and preachers at home are doing. They are calling on the dead to rise from the dead.

And those who hear the call become themselves voices joining in the call, and by their lives, their deeds, their words, they take part in this greatest work of God, and are helpers in this first resurrection of the dead.

And my best wish for each of you is that you may have a part in that voice which is going through all the world, and calling on dead souls and saying to them, 'Arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light'.

III. I should be so glad now if I could tell you something of the joy that springs up in the heart when God's voice is listened to, and the light He has kindled is followed. It is a joy like that of the angels.

This autumn, you will remember, we had some heavy storms at sea. And one of these storms came, unlooked-for, after a beautiful day. It was a

Wednesday, in August. Hundreds of northern fishing-boats went out to sea, and many of them were far at sea when the storm burst forth. It was a fearful night; the rain came down in torrents, the wind blew a hurricane. At sea the fishermen were driven helpless before the wind; on shore the fisher-folk went up and down, wondering what was going on with those dear to them at sea. On the morning that followed—the storm still raging—a telegram came from Burghhead to the crew of the lifeboat at Nairn to say that a vessel had been wrecked on an old sand-bar about seven miles away. The men of the lifeboat were themselves at sea battling for their own lives. But as many brave fellows as were needed offered to man the boat and go to the wreck. Everything seemed to be against them. The tide was out. It was a long and heavy pull over the sands before the boat could be launched. It was a task heavier still to row the seven miles to where the vessel was wrecked. But the heaviest toil of all awaited them when they came where the wreck was caught. The waves rose high as hills, and dashed upon the wreck, and then, sucking backwards for many yards, came on again with fiercer blows. The crew in the lifeboat had to catch their chance in the brief moments when the waves were rushing towards the vessel. In those brief moments, bringing their boat near, they saved nine men. A moment only was possible each time. In that moment the lifeboat drew near, a man jumped on board, and, one by one, all who were on the wrecked vessel were saved. Only brave men could have done the work; only men with skilful hands and loyal hearts. But now they turned their prow back towards Nairn with their precious load. What a pull that was back over the seven miles—the wind beating fiercely, the waves terrible for size! The brave men never lost heart. On they came, nearer to safety by every stroke of their oars—nearer and nearer still. At last they turned the corner at Culbin Sands, and the harbour was in view. There, on the pier and along the shore, great crowds were watching. Although they could not share the brave labour of the lifeboat, they shared the sympathy of its heroic men. And when the lifeboat was sighted coming round the coast, a great shout of joy burst from the entire crowd. Louder and louder it rose, as, peering into the distance, the people discovered that there were saved people on board. But when the boat swept into the harbour, and it became known that every man of the wrecked crew had been saved, and when the very men, one by one, rescued from death, stepped ashore, shouting could no longer express the joy that was felt. Many burst into tears, others seized the strangers and embraced them as if they had been sons and brothers.

It was the joy of angels, the joy that is in the presence of God over the saving of the lost. And a beautiful thing in this joy is, that the greater the deliverance has been, the higher and gladsomer is the joy. It is very high when sailors are saved from a



wrecked ship ; but it is as high as heaven when the salvation is from a wrecked life.

IV. I have told you of the joy which rises in the hearts of the angels when the lost are saved. But fully to know the greatness of this joy I must now tell you how it works, and how high it rises, when people are saved who did not know they were lost. There are whole tribes of lost people who do not know they are lost, and who do not want to be saved, just because they do not know they are lost. They are worse, far worse than sailors on wrecked ships, only they do not feel their lostness.

Far away from this, near the southernmost point of South America, is a land called Tierra del Fuego, and the people who lived in that land fifty years ago were in this very case. They were lost and did not know they were lost. About that time they were visited by a young man called Charles Darwin, who had seen many lands and many tribes, and he said they were the poorest, the most miserable, the least like human beings of any he had seen. 'Poor wretches!' he called them. They had neither houses to live in nor clothes to wear; their speech was more like the cries of birds and beasts than the speech of human beings. They seemed to him to be without thought of almost any kind. Never, surely, was a people more lost than these. They had lost the likeness of God, in which God had made man; they had lost knowledge of God; church and school and home were lost. Instead of clothes they daubed themselves over with white paint. They were more like beasts of the field than men and women. But now to this race which had lost the very memory of better or other times, and was itself lost in ignorance and beast-like ways, a way of salvation was opened up through the mercy of God. And here is the story of their salvation, as it was told by Dr. Parker at a great church meeting in Hanley. There was found in the city of Bristol, between two bridges, a poor infant, thrown out there to perish. He was found on St. Thomas's Day. Because he was found between the bridges he was called Bridges for surname, and because he was found on St. Thomas's Day he was called Thomas for Christian name. And by and by this deserted child became the Rev. Thomas Bridges, and set his heart on going out into the heathen world to save souls. And to this very land of Tierra del Fuego, of which I have been speaking, he was sent. He listened to the strange speech of the wretched people; he caught the tones; he compared one with another; he made an alphabet of them. Then he made the letters into words; he wrote them down; he came to understand their speech, came to be able to speak to them. He told them the story of the love of God, told them all about Jesus. He translated the Gospels into their language, and taught them to read them for themselves. Through his ministry they were lifted up out of their poor, wretched, lost condition. A new life entered into them; they became human beings again; they became Christian worshippers; they built houses and

dwelt in them; they were clothed and in their right mind. And it could be truly said of them, as of the prodigal in the parable, they were dead and came to life again; they were lost, and were found.

When Charles Darwin heard of the change, something of the joy which angels feel entered into his heart, and he sent a gift of money to the society which had sent Mr. Bridges out. Every lover of mankind must have felt in the same way. Over that work the angels in the presence of God, let us be sure, had a great joy.

Now I will tell you why I have spoken to you about the joy of the angels. It is because this is a joy which God wishes you to share. It is really the joy of God; it is joy in the presence of the angels; God's joy first, then the joy of the angels. And it is this joy which God is offering to His children when He invites them to take an interest and a part in the work of missions to the heathen, in the helping of the poor, and in the saving of the souls of the lost.

V. Very fair to see are your shapely bodies, your faces glowing with health, your eyes gleaming with life; and very wonderful to think of is that something within you which no eye can see, which listens to the words I am speaking, and understands the thoughts that are passing from my mind to yours.

But more wonderful still and more fair is that other something which listens to God and understands His thoughts; which catches the light that comes from His face and makes it a light in your lives.

This other something is what the Bible calls 'the candle of the Lord'. It is given to every one. It is shining in your hearts now, in some brightly, in some less brightly. I have seen its light many a time in the happy gleam of a child's eye. If I knew you, as you are known in your homes, I might see it in your words and deeds. It is the lamp or torch of God within your hearts; it is one of God's greatest gifts; it is a light to give light to you on the way to heaven; it is a light God expects you to bring still burning when at last you come into His presence.

In that city of Athens where Paul saw the altar to the unknown God, it was once, in the old days, the custom to have games in honour of their gods and heroes. Among the games that were held was the race of the torch-bearers. Each runner received a lighted torch at the beginning of the race, and the runner who came first to the goal with his torch burning received the prize.

This race was held in honour of Prometheus, a hero of whom Athens and other cities in the old time were justly proud. He was the likeliest to Christ of any of their heroes, and he did a service to man that was only second to Christ's. It was he who first brought fire to men. The people then living believed that in his love and pity he went up to heaven and carried away the fire and brought it down to them. It was one of the greatest kindnesses any hero could do. Winter was made less wintry. Darkness was shut out of the home. Hearthstones were laid. Log-

fires were kindled. The labourers coming in from the fields cold and hungry had a warm place to come to, and food well cooked. And in the long winter evenings the family gathered about the fireside, and mothers spun, and daughters knitted, and little boys watched the shadows flickering on the wall, or listened to the stories that were told till it was time to go to bed.

No wonder people held torch races in honour of the hero who gave them blessings like these! The race itself was a splendid sight. The winning-post was in the city; the starting-place a mile and a half distant, among the groves of olive and cypress, where the great Plato kept his school. It was night when the runners started. How their torches must have flared in the night air as they came rushing up the hill! How sad for the runners whose torches flickered out! How joyous for the swift, strong youth who came first to the goal with his torch still burning!

The days when this race was run are long since past. The nations who kept it up are dead and gone. But to something like that race, only grander, we are still called by God. We are called to run with patience the race that is set before us. Our very life is a kind of race, and every one born has to be a runner in it. I have seen this grander race, I have seen the runners, but in other cities than Athens and with other torches than those the Athenian runners bore. I know men and women in this very land who are running it, and striving to keep their torches burning as they run. I know boys and girls who have begun to run it. I am sure there are some of you now reading these words. It is to encourage you in this race, and to help you to keep your torches burning to the end, that I am speaking to you now.

I sometimes look back upon the years of my childhood. As often as I do, I see again the bright young faces which were around me then, bright faces, bright lives, eager young spirits preparing, although they knew it not, to run this very race.

I can say truly of many of those companions that the candle of the Lord, the torch for God's runner, had begun to shine in their hearts. They were believers in God, in heaven, in the resurrection of the dead. They knew the story of Jesus, they believed in His love. Happy hearts! Happy children! I can say of them as I recall their forms, 'The angels of God visited them in their dreams'. Those young hearts were touched with the feeling of the nearness and goodness of God. I have heard them sing the twenty-third Psalm with voices filled with joy. And I have seen the tears running down their cheeks when the story of the Cross was told in their hearing.

Many of those young runners have long since finished their race. I have watched the careers of some through all the years of their life. I have seen the light burning in their words, in their deeds, in their very eyes. I have watched them at their tasks, when they looked to me like the servants of the Lord mentioned in the Gospel, whose loins were girded, and whose lights were burning. I have seen among them

saintly runners who came to the goal of their life their outward strength all spent, but their inner light freshly burning.

Ah! and I have also seen some of them coming to the end of their day whose lights had ceased to burn for years, and who had to lie down in the darkness they brought on themselves. I recall one who finished his race before he was twenty, and another who went on till forty, and both came to the end in darkness. Not one ray of the early faith or joy in God burning! All the light of the soul gone clean out through evil thoughts and ways!

You are just setting out in this race, your torches are fresh and bright and brightly burning. God has kindled the light of the knowledge of His love in your hearts. That is His torch. Do you think it can be anything but a sorrow to Him, if any of you, if even a single one of you, should come into His presence at the end with this light of love gone out? He is very earnest in wishing that you try all you can by His help to keep the light burning. —ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *The Child Jesus*, p. 147.

#### JESUS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR

'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.'—REVELATION III. 20

THERE is one door before which, I think, Jesus loves above all others to stand—it is *the door of your young hearts*. Yes! I think I am right in saying so that this gracious Saviour, though He pleads with all hearts, delights specially to plead with those which, like yours, are yet tender. Let us inquire into one or two reasons for this.

I. Jesus loves specially to knock at the door of young hearts, because **He knows He will more readily get admission there**. Other and older doors have often a number of bolts and locks put upon them to keep Him out. They are often covered with rust and weatherbeaten. They either refuse to move on their hinges, or else, as in that beautiful picture you may have seen, called 'The Light of the World,' nettles and thistles, the nettles and thistles of bad habits and confirmed sins, so cover them and bar the way, that it seems wellnigh impossible for Him to approach.

But it is different, in most cases, with you. The footroad to your souls is open. The rust of those vicious habits has not yet tarnished the fresh locks and hinges. Conscience, God's servant within, is not, as often is the case with others, asleep or drowsy, but vigilant and wakeful. While many an old heart, like the deaf adder, refuses to hear Jesus knocking, but knocking in vain, He loves the ring of your young voices, saying, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest Thou without?' Old Eli heard no voice. But the child's ear heard it, saying, 'Samuel, Samuel,' and he said, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'. They are *young ears* which most readily listen, and *young hearts* which are most readily opened!

II. A second reason why Jesus loves specially to knock at the door of young hearts is, that *He can*

*knock there gently.* Your hymn calls Him 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild'. When an old Prophet describes the future Saviour's character, he says of Him, in contrast with the earthly warrior who comes 'with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood'—'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench' (Isa. xlii. 3). That is to say, He loves to speak gently and to act gently. His royal name is, Prince of Peace. The illustrious Napoleon said, 'Cæsar and Alexander fought and conquered by arms, Jesus Christ fights and conquers by love'. Oh! how many on their thrones in glory, won by His kindness and tenderness, can testify in the words of the Psalmist, 'Thy gentleness hath made me great' (Ps. xviii. 35).

III. Another reason why Jesus loves specially to knock at the door of young hearts is, **Because childhood is the choicest season to welcome Him in.** No one likes to stand out in winter, or at midnight, amid cold and frost and snow. Jesus indeed, so loving and compassionate is He, is willing to come even in the winter of old age, and knock at doors covered with icicles, or whose overgrown pathway is drenched with slush or bristling with thorns. But undoubtedly He loves best the early spring, when the sun is rising, and the birds are singing, and the flowers are budding. He loves best to come in the morning of young life. The opening sermon of this book recalls the day of His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem; when, in Royal majesty, He knocked at so many heart-doors, and when so many seemed to welcome Him as 'Blessed' (Mark xi. 9). Yet, as we have there seen, the answer to these pleadings which He appears to have prized most of all was, when 'the Children in the Temple' were seen opening the Temple-gates of their young affections, and when their youthful voices were heard singing 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' Older hearts, at which He knocked on that occasion, might be closed again; around them, the nettles and thistles might grow again; those crying 'Hosanna' to-day, might be shouting 'Crucify Him' to-morrow. But young eyes would not so readily forget the palm-covered way. Young voices would not so readily forget the infant song of welcome. Yes, those children in Jerusalem who thus early opened their souls to Jesus, would in all likelihood turn out His best and most faithful followers and disciples. Perhaps He would say of them and to them, in another sense, what He afterwards said to His Apostles, 'And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning' (John xv. 27).

Listen to this heavenly Visitor. He may be knocking now. He may be saying (He *is* saying), 'My son, My daughter, give Me thine heart'. Ponder, once more, the beautiful story-picture of the text. See this Divine Merchantman unpacking His priceless treasures! He speaks to you, yes, to each of you individually. And how does He address you? 'Here' (we may imagine Him saying) 'is My gold! Here is a golden vesture, a clothing of wrought gold: it is the

robe of My righteousness! Here is a golden ring: it is the jewelled ring of adoption. Here are the two golden bracelets of faith and love. Here is a golden necklace set with diamonds and rubies; the precious stones of kindness and gentleness, forgiveness and charity. Here is a golden crown: it is "the crown of glory which fadeth not away" (1 Pet. v. 4).—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 92.

## HEAVEN

'And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and where came they?'

'And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

'Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.'

'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.'

'For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

REVELATION VII. 13-17.

I do not think there is a more lovely picture in all the Bible picture-gallery than this. I do not think there are more beautiful words among all the Bible's beautiful sayings. It is said of a famous poet that he never read them without tears. May you now ponder them; earnestly desiring that with God's blessing they may be one day a real picture and a joyful description of yourselves. They speak of four things:—

A bright company. An honoured company. A holy company. A happy company.

I. A **Bright Company**.—St. John was asked the question, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes?'

His reply tells how these robes came to be bright and shining. 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' All these robes were once black, and soiled with sin. But the blood of Jesus Christ has washed out every guilty stain, and they are now 'without fault before the throne' (Rev. xiv.). Oh, how completely and fully does Jesus take away sin! You remember Isaiah's golden verse: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool' (Isa. i. 18). I read the other day of one who dreamt on his death-bed that his sins were like a great mountain, but that a drop of blood fell upon that mountain and dissolved it in a moment. I have heard of a dying boy who was asked, 'What verse of all your hymns do you like best?' The instant reply was given:—

Because the Saviour shed His blood

To wash away my sin;

Bathed in that pure and precious flood,

Behold me white and clean!

Have you got this white robe? And will you wear it for ever as one of this bright multitude?

II. The text speaks of an **Honoured Company**.—If you look at the whole passage you will see that



they occupy the place nearest the presence of the great King. There are various circles of adoring worshippers described. 'All the angels' in their glittering ranks 'stood round about the throne.' But these angels, again, are represented as standing 'round about the elders' (that is, the redeemed from the earth). In other words, the redeemed occupy the innermost circle of all. Wondrous thought! that even the angel and archangel in heaven seem to give way to the ransomed sinner, wearing the white robe and bearing the ever-green palm! It is specially noted that their greatest privilege and honour is, not that they have their abode in a very beautiful and glorious place—a city with gates of pearl and streets of gold, but because they are thus *near God*, and because that Great God is to them their all in all. Are they spoken of as kings? They are 'before the throne of God, and He that sitteth on the throne dwells among them'. Are they spoken of as priests? They 'serve Him day and night in His temple'. Are they spoken of as sheep reposing on the green meadows and pastures of heaven—an eternal Summer on the hills of glory? The chief part of their bliss consists in having the presence and love of the great Shepherd. It is the *Lamb* who 'leads' them there, and 'feeds' them there. Yes, God is their 'chiefest joy'. Other joys of heaven are like the bright stars, but He is the glorious Central Sun: they have no glory by reason of the glory which excelleteth.

It was a beautiful saying of a poor blind Syrian boy in the schools of Beyrout, 'The first object these eyes of mine will ever see will be Jesus'.

III. The text speaks of a *Holy Company*.—They are described as 'serving God'. And not serving Him only at brief times, or in a half-hearted way, by fits and starts, but they 'serve Him day and night in His temple'.

The redeemed in glory will delight to serve their Heavenly Master and Heavenly Parent. Here they cannot obey Him perfectly. God has too often reason to say, 'If I, then, be a Father, where has been mine honour? and if I be a Master, where has been my fear?' (Mal. 1. 6). But in yonder bright world, we read in the last chapter of this Book of Revelation, 'His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads'. Just as slaves or servants, in ancient times, had the names or initials of their master branded on their brows to betoken that they were his property, so will Christ's redeemed and ransomed people in glory have His name engraven on their foreheads, and their song through eternity will be, 'O Lord, truly we are Thy servants': 'We are not our own, we are bought with a price!'

IV. The text speaks of a *Happy Company*.—There is a great deal of happiness in this happy world. God has not hung His creation in curtains of black, or made its sounds to be sounds of mourning. No, He has draped it in garments of beauty. He has a nted His heavens, not with the colour of ashes, but with bright blue. The sun rises from a couch of gold, and

pillows his head on a couch of amber. The groves are melodious with sweetest music. The very streams go singing all the way down the mountain-clefts to their ocean home. While this, however, is true, alas! sin has done its best to mar and wreck the world's happiness—to spoil its glad music and drown its song. Sin has done its best to tear down these draperies of gladness and joy, and to hang it round and round in weeds and sackcloth. Sin (to use the Apostle's words) has brought the creation under 'the bondage of corruption'. Think of its pains and sorrows, its sick-beds and death-beds, its bereavements and broken hearts, its famines and pestilences, its hunger and thirst and nakedness; its hatreds and variances; its strifes and jealousies; its wars, and slavery, and bloodshed, and cruel wrongs. But whatever be the evils and sufferings of earth, on the gate of the celestial city there shall be written, regarding these, the words—'No more!' Hunger, thirst, sickness, sorrow, pain, death, the grave—the Redeemed shall know of all these 'No more!' They shall then have entered a *holy* place, and therefore a *happy* place. The curse of sin is stamped on 'this present evil world'; but of that blessed 'world to come' it is specially said, 'And there shall be *no more curse*' (Rev. xxii. 3). The white robe will never again be exchanged for mourning; for 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'. You may have seen bushes, and trees, and flowers so drenched with the night-dew that it hangs like tear-drops upon them; but the sun rises, his beams shine, these dewy tears vanish—they have what is called 'evaporated'; they are dried up by the warming rays. So if believers—plants and 'trees of righteousness'—are from various causes full of tears now, God, the great Sun of heaven, will shine upon them and disperse them for ever!—J. R. MACDUFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 245.

#### HEAVEN

'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'—REVELATION VII. 17.

LIGH HUNT, in his autobiography, in speaking of his dear mother's death, tells us, 'Her greatest pleasure during her decay (she died of a slow consumption) was to lie on a sofa, looking at the setting sun. She used to liken it to the door of heaven, and fancy her lost children there, waiting for her.'

A beautiful door, indeed, to a beautiful world!

The remark of the little boy was certainly a very striking one, who, one night, after looking up in wonder at the shining stars, cried out to his father, 'If the *outside* of heaven be so glorious, how grand the *inside* must be!'

Did it ever come into your minds to ask why that better land is called *heaven*? The origin of the name is curious. The old English word *heave* means to *throw* or to *cast up*; and so the sky which seems *heaved*, or *heaven up* came to be spoken of as *heaven*.

'That better world, beyond the cold and troubled waters of death, is sometimes called in the Bible, 'life,' and 'eternal life'; 'the glory of God'; 'peace'; an 'eternal weight of glory'; 'the heavenly Jerusalem'; 'the kingdom of heaven'; and an 'eternal inheritance'. Poets have always pictured it as the land of flowers, and perpetual sunshine.

There, everlasting spring abides,  
And never fading flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.

Bright fields, beyond the swelling flood,  
Stand dress'd in living green;  
So to the Jews fair Canaan stood,  
While Jordan rolled between.

How it casts a radiance even on the gloomy grave, this remembrance of our heavenly home!

On the bright December day when Washington Irving was laid down to his peaceful rest, on the shore of the river which he loved, the beautiful Indian summer sent back one balmy breath to temper the frosty air, and the unclouded sky was soft with serenest sunshine. 'I could not but remember his last words to me,' writes an admiring friend, 'more than a year ago, when his book was finished, and his health was failing: "I am getting ready to go; I am shutting up my door and windows". And I could not but feel that they were all open now, and bright with the light of eternal morning.'

The Lamb spoken of in the text, and who is represented as leading forth His people unto 'living fountains of waters,' is our Blessed Lord and Saviour.

It was as the spotless *Lamb*, that He was typified in the sacrifices of the Mosaic law.

'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!' exclaimed St. John the Baptist, as he directed the attention of his disciples to the great Prophet who had lately arisen in Galilee.

As a gentle and uncomplaining Lamb our Blessed Lord was led to the sacrifice on Good Friday; and, at the last day, when we shall behold Him in His exaltation and glory, we shall still speak of Him with adoring gratitude and love, as the Lamb Who has redeemed us to God by His blood.

As here on the earth the Lord Jesus was the Saviour of His people, so in the better land, He shall be the dispenser of their happiness.

The imagery of the text is certainly very striking and beautiful, and Robert Burns, the Scotch poet, says that from his early childhood he was never able to read it with eyes undimmed by tears. The Saviour is always, and everywhere, the Good Shepherd to His redeemed children.

'He shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.'

The happiness of heaven is described as fresh and ever flowing, like streams in the desert. The 'fountains' are called 'living' because they will never be dried up nor exhausted.

When Cynæus, the ambassador of Pyrrhus, came back from Rome, his master asked him what he

thought of the city. He answered, that it seemed to be a *commonwealth of kings*. And such is heaven. Every child of God who gains admission there will have his robes of honour, his sceptre of power, and his crown of glory.

There is not one person reading this sermon who does not hope to go to heaven when he dies. I say, *hopes* to do so. He must, however, do something besides *hope*. Those happy and blessed ones whom the Lamb shall feed, and lead to the living fountains of waters, in the better land, will be the very persons who have allowed the Lamb, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to lead them *here*. Do you ask, *how?* The answer is easy enough; those who permit the Saviour to lead them in the way of God's law, and in the works of His commandments. The language of heaven, and a taste for goodness and purity, must be gained here upon the earth.

There are two things essential to one's enjoying a grand musical celebration; one must have a ticket of admission, and must have a taste for music. One of these would be useless without the other. So those who are admitted to heaven, at the last day, will have two qualifications; a title to the better inheritance, and a meetness for it. Have you and I secured both of these qualifications?—If not, have we any time to throw away?—JOHN N. NORRIS, *Milk and Honey*, p. 106.

## HOW CHRIST DRIES UP OUR TEARS

REVELATION VII. 17.

I USED to wonder why the Bible says so much about tears. At that time I did not understand tears. I could not imagine a life of which the drying up of tears should be a sign; nor a Saviour to whom it should be a work.

I suppose the same wonder is in boys still. Children know laughter better than weeping. They have not learned how full our life is of tears. And consequently they do not yet feel the need of a Saviour who shall be a drier up of tears. That may be the case with some of you. You may be saying to yourselves at this moment: 'Tears! What have we to do with tears? We have no tears to be dried up.' Well, I am going to tell you how Christ dries up our tears, and I will begin by telling a story about tears.

Many hundred years ago, in a village a thousand miles and more away from this, there lived a little girl not older than some of you. It is not unlikely that she said just what you are saying about tears. I can fancy her stopping in the midst of her romping some bright day and saying to herself, 'What a happy, joyous time this is! What a happy world! How nice to go whirling and singing and laughing under the sunlight as we children do!' And even years after, when she was no longer a little girl, I can fancy her still thinking that she lived in a happy world. She saw the streams of people as they went past on the Sabbath day to worship. She saw happy fathers, happy mothers, happy children. And her young heart might sometimes rise on tiptoe, and look for-

ward two, three, four years, and see the sweetest visions of a beautiful home in the future, and dear forms glancing out and in, and herself the queen of it all.

Well, this girl grew up to be a woman; and God gave her a beautiful home, and He made her queen of it all. He gave her a husband and one little son. Her visions of the future had come true. And you might think she was still happy, and, like you, had no tears to be dried up. My own opinion is that she ought to have been happy. Thinking of her life in that beautiful home, I can believe that she was very happy. But a day came—a sad day for her—when, if you or I could have looked in through her window, we should have seen her standing by the bed-side wringing her hands, and turning away her face to hide her tears. There, upon that bed, lies her sick husband about to die. His face is pale; his hands are thin and cold. He makes a feeble movement with his lips. She stoops down and kisses him—for the last time. Then his eyelids close, and his breathing ceases, and he is dead. She that was the happy wife—and before that the happy, happy little girl—has become a widow. She has tears now to be dried up.

I dare say there are girls who do not know how sorry and tear-filled the heart of a widow is. The day may come when they will know it only too well. On that sorrowful day, if ever it darken on any of you, I pray God you may remember what I am telling to-day; and you will find strength in the thought that Jesus can dry up your tears.

The poor widow of whom I am speaking could not find that comfort. She had never heard of Jesus. But she turned to her little boy, and said in her heart, 'This boy will dry up my tears'. And it is very sweet for a widow to have a little boy. When her heart is sad and weary she can look to him and say, 'That is *his* child'. And when the child grows up she is pleased with the thought that he has his father's eyes, and hair, and voice, and walk. And she says, and she is very happy when she says it, 'He is the very image of his father'.

This boy grew older and taller, and the widow loved him more and more. God had taken away her husband, but her son was left. Perhaps she said to herself, 'I shall be happy once again. My boy speaks kindly to me when I am sad; he helps me when I am wearied; he will work for me when I am old; he will sit beside me when I am sick; and he will bury me when I am dead.'

The poor old widow! I think I see her sitting by her door some summer evening, looking at her boy as he comes up the street, recalling a form that twenty years before was just like his, and very glad that a living picture of that form was with her still. I should not be surprised if the pleased mother thought she had no more tears to be dried up.

But one day there was a great stir of people about her house. Some, with sad faces, were going in; others were gathering before the door. Inside, the poor widow was weeping again. Where is that brave

son who was to have cheered her in her sorrow? Ah! you may search for him, but you will not find him. He is neither in the field nor about the village. But if you listen you will hear a shuffling of feet within the door. And see! there is an open coffin coming forth; and behind it walks the poor widow. Her boy is there—on that coffin—dead. 'He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.'

In the country where this happened the graveyards are outside of the town. I think it would be very sad for the mourners to pace along the streets with that coffin; but sadder still when they had to leave the streets behind and go out into the open country. Something of this sadness you may have felt yourselves. Perhaps you have seen a funeral going from your own house; and you went to the window and watched it slowly fading down the streets; and so long as you could still see it you felt that you had not taken the last farewell. There was one little tie between it and you still. But when it turned into another street, and you could see it no more, then the tie which bound you to the dead was utterly broken. This very sadness, I am sure, the old widow must have felt. When the little procession of mourners passed out from among the houses, and out through the gate, although she was with them, she would feel that the tie which bound her to her beloved boy was fast snapping asunder. She did not speak. It is a heavy grief which cannot speak. But if there had been a window in her breast, you might have seen her soul toiling for utterance, as if she wanted to say, 'Oh, my son, thou hast left the village for ever! Thou art drawing near to the place of graves. I shall never see thee more. Thou fruit of my early love! thou image of thy buried father! thou hope of my old age! my staff and stay! my green and flourishing tree! how art thou cast down and withered! The grave has opened its mouth for thee. My son, my son; would to God I had died for thee, oh, my son!'

That was a touching sorrow. And it seemed as hopeless as it was touching, for there was no one left to lighten her sorrow. Her husband was in the grave; her son was now to be laid by his side; and who then would dry up her tears? There are people who say, 'Time will dry up sorrow'; and there are people who say, 'Friendship will dry up sorrow'. And time with its changes can do much, and friends with their love can do much; but neither time nor friendship can dry up such tears as that widow was that day shedding. Death holds what he has gotten with a hand of iron, and who is he who can unloose its grasp?

But I have a wonderful thing to tell you next. This widow's son died when the blessed Saviour was upon the earth; and help was coming near of which she did not even dream. For at that very moment, when her dead boy was being carried out of the town, Jesus was about to enter! Death going in that direction! The Lord of life coming in this! His disciples were with Him, and He was teaching them by the way. They were drawing life from His words.



And yet if you had seen Him, you would have seen nothing to tell you that He was the Lord of life. He had neither a crown upon His head, nor a sceptre in His hand. To appearance He was but a poor and toilworn man. 'But when He saw the widow, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, *Weep not.* And He came and touched the coffin: and they that bare it stood still. And He said, *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.* And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, *That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people.*'

There was a great emperor living at Rome when that took place; and in this land of ours there was a people who lived in dens and caves instead of houses, and for clothing had skins of beasts. Here, a wild, strange people, with strange, wild looks and ways! There, a great emperor, with gold crowns and purple robes, and silver couches and marble palaces! But if you could bring back that old time to the earth, and look at it with your own eyes, I think I know what you would most wish to see at the close of the day which saw that wonder done. Not the wild people of this land in their dismal caves—not the great emperor of Rome in his marble palaces—but that widow of Nain at her fireside with her son. You would wish to see how she looked at her risen, living son, and how her son looked at her. And you would wish to hear the Psalm which they sang together to Him who had unlocked the hand of death, and given back to the childless son she had lost.

Christ dried up the tears of the widow by giving back to her the son she had lost. He has many ways of drying up tears, but none that He uses oftener than this.

He dried up the tears of Martha and Mary the same way: He gave them back their brother. He dried up the tears of Jairus the same way: He gave him back his daughter. He dried up the nobleman's tears the same way: He gave him back his son. What he did to these bereaved ones was a promise to them and us. When you see the buds on the trees in spring, you know that the buds will yet be leaves, and that under the leaves will be clusters of fruit. The raising of Lazarus, of the widow's son, of Jairus' daughter, of the nobleman's son by the Lord, and His kindness in giving back, to those who were weeping, the beloved ones they had lost, were so many buds on the tree of life. They were promises of still better things.

These better things began to appear when Jesus Himself rose from the dead. The others were promises: that was fulfilment. The others were buds: that was the fruit. For He rose from the dead that all might rise. And His resurrection morning was the dawn of the resurrection morning of the whole world.

The tears of the nobleman, of the widow of Nain,

of Jairus, of Martha and Mary would all break out anew. They and their beloved ones would one day be again sundered by death. But on the resurrection morning the dead shall be given back never more to be taken away. There shall be no more death, no more parting of friends, no more crying. All who have fallen asleep in Him shall then be given back to their friends. Mothers shall receive their children, and children their parents, and their brothers and sisters. It will be a glorious day. The gate of heaven on that day will be crowded with scenes like that which the disciples saw at the gate of Nain. Sorrow will give place to joy. Tears will be dried up for ever. And friends who were parted by death will be given to each other again:—

Kindred joyous kindred greeting  
Pain and grief behind them cast.

Even now, Jesus is saying to those who have lost their beloved ones 'Weep not'. If some dear brother or sister, or if your godly father or mother has been taken from you by death, do not sorrow as those who have no hope. You have this hope: Christ will give back to you the dear one you have lost. Wait patiently on Him. The resurrection morning is sure to come. And then the trumpet shall sound, and the graves shall give up their dead, and the long-parted ones shall rush together, and they shall be for ever with the Lord, and all their tears shall be dried up.—ALEXANDER MACLEOD, *Talking to the Children*, p. 81.

#### THE GREAT RED DRAGON AND THE LAMB ON MOUNT ZION

- 'And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
- 'And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.'—REVELATION XII. 3, 4.
- 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.
- 'And they sung as it were a new song before the throne.'—REVELATION XIV. 3.

In the verses of our text we have two very different pictures brought before us from this closing book of Holy Scripture. We have a picture of Satan and his gloomy abode, and of Christ and His glorious, happy heaven.

I. We have in the first of the two verses just read a picture of **Satan**. He is likened to 'a Great Red Dragon'. I know I need hardly tell you that the dragon is altogether a fabulous creature. It is curious, however, that most pagan nations of old believed in the existence of this huge winged serpent or crocodile. Many of their heroes made it the object of their lives to destroy the supposed monster, and prevent it from doing mischief. One of the 'labours,' as they were called, in the life of Hercules, the giant-god of the heathen world, was the slaying of the dragon. On many ancient shields and banners of England may be seen, to this day, St. George on horseback with the dragon under his horse's hoofs: he in the act of piercing it with his spear. The

Christians and martyrs of the early Church and the Middle Ages were also sometimes represented as trampling the dragon beneath their feet.

But if the wild beast of the ancients be a fabulous and unreal creation, not so is the evil spirit spoken of in the text, of which the dragon is the symbol. The great red dragon is here pictured lashing his tail backwards and forwards and upwards. It reaches as high as the stars (ver. 4). These stars mean the bright angels. Some of these he caused to fall from their lofty estate. His tail reached their glorious thrones and swept them down to the earth. It is the same monster foe who to this hour tempts mankind—alike old and young—to sin. He tempts some to lie, some to steal, some to be cruel, some to be dishonest, some to be quarrelsome, some to be impure. There is another verse of Scripture which says, 'The whole world lieth in wickedness'—or, as that rather means, 'lieth in the *Wicked One*' (1 John v. 19). It is a terrible description of the devil's power. It reminds one of a mother with her child on her knee hushing it asleep. 'The whole world' is as it were in the lap of Satan, and he is singing the lullaby, 'Peace, peace; when there is no peace' (Jer. vi. 14). He sings unwary souls into the sleep of death. He sings asleep only to destroy. He is like Jael the Kenite, who with flattering promises decoyed Sisera into her tent. You remember when she had, with false tongue, assured him of safety, giving him 'milk and butter out of a lordly dish,' and covered him over with the tent carpet, and the wearied man sank in slumber; she took a nail and hammer and drove the iron into his temples.

So Satan deceives and hushes many into the sleep of self-security, and then he comes out in his true character as 'Apollyon,' which means 'Destroyer!' 'Oh, this dreadful dragon!' are you not ready to exclaim? If he has swept down angel-thrones; if he has tried to overcome with his wicked devices the Lord of Glory Himself; how can I escape his power?

II. The second picture of the text is one of Jesus and heaven.

On the lofty Mount Zion, Jesus is seen 'standing' in the form of a Lamb.

It is well worth noting, as I did once before regarding another passage of the Gospels, that the word of St. John here translated 'Lamb,' is in the original Greek 'a *little Lamb*'. What a picture is thus given us of the 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild'! It is His own description—His own picture of *Himself*. He had perhaps *you* in His thoughts, when He thus revealed Himself to His servant, as 'a *little Lamb!*' As He had just before appeared to the exile in Patmos under the symbol of a Lion, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' (Rev. v. 5), He might say, 'Little children may be afraid when they think of My power, and greatness, and strength as a Lion. I will give them another symbol to attract them to Me and cause them to love Me. I will appear as "a little Lamb". I will thus show them that, as a Lion,

I can protect the strong; and as "a little Lamb" I can guard and tend and love the weak and young and helpless. I used the same word in speaking to Peter on the shores of the lake, when I said to him, "Feed My *little Lambs*"; and I have not forgotten *you*, "Fear not, *little flock*, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!"'

This little Lamb on the Heavenly Zion is represented as surrounded with 144,000 saints. These saints sing together 'a new song'. No wonder they sing, for they are now safe; they are now for ever happy and blessed. Do you ask, how are they thus safe and happy? I think they would themselves reply in the words of St. Paul, 'We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us'. 'Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

But this Lamb on Mount Zion is not only surrounded by those who have reached their crowns and their thrones; He is the glorious Head of His Church still on earth—those who are still battling with sin and temptation. While now speaking to you who are young pilgrims, I like to apply to Him the words of Daniel, 'The Great Prince that standeth for the children of Thy people' (Dan. xii. 1). He is standing for you on Mount Zion as a Kingly Intercessor. He is like Moses and Joshua together at Rephidim of old (Exod. xvii. 8). He is Joshua, fighting for you in the plains: He is Moses, pleading for you on the Mount. Only *unlike* Moses in this that His hands never 'grow weary'.

When Satan tempts, keep near to Jesus. When Satan tempts, do as Jesus did. Go to the Word of God for weapons to fight him with. To three different assaults Jesus answered three different times—'*It is written*'. You may remember when I preached to you many Sundays ago a sermon on the Bible, I reminded you that when Christian smote Apollyon with the sword (the Sword of God), the Adversary sprang forth his dragon wings and sped away; 'and Christian saw him no more'!—J. R. MACDEFF, *Hosannas of the Children*, p. 199.

#### SMALL AND GREAT STANDING BEFORE GOD

'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened.'—REVELATION XX. 12.

A CHRISTIAN King of Hungary, being low-spirited and silent one day, his rattle-brained and giddy brother inquired the cause.

'The truth is,' the good man answered, 'I have been a great sinner against God, and am afraid to die and to appear before Him in the judgment.'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed the younger brother, in a sneering tone; 'these are nothing but gloomy thoughts.'

The king made no reply, but he quietly resolved to teach the thoughtless young man a lesson. It was then the custom in Hungary that if the executioner came and blew a loud blast of a trumpet before any person's door, it was a signal that he would, in a short time, be led forth to execution. The king ac-

cordingly commanded the officer of justice to sound the trumpet before his brother's door at midnight. This was done, and the young man rushed forth amazed and terrified, and seeing the messenger of death he expected that his doom was sealed. Hastening to the royal palace, he cried aloud to the king, 'Alas! brother, what have I done which has so grievously offended you?'

'Nothing,' answered the king. 'You have never offended me. Is the sight of my executioner so dreadful to you? And shall not I, who have grievously offended against God, fear to be brought before His judgment-seat?'

As the trumpet of the executioner startled that foolish young man, so will multitudes be dismayed, at the last, when the trumpet of the archangel shall wake the slumbering dead, and summon us all to the bar of judgment.

This is the subject which is so vividly brought before us in the solemn services of the Advent season.

*Advent*, as you know, means *coming*. There are two Advents: the first, the coming of our dear Saviour, in great humility, as the gentle Babe of Bethlehem; the second, His coming with power and glory, to judge the quick and the dead. The most important event which will ever happen is that referred to in the text: 'I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened.'

We are accustomed to speak of grand occasions, now, such as the inauguration of a president, or the celebration of some popular anniversary, as 'great days!'

Such pageants as these, however, are as nothing compared with what our eyes shall behold when the Lord Jesus comes, attended by the angelic hosts, to set up His judgment-seat.

It is so much easier to remember sermons which are arranged according to method and order, that I shall drive down a few stakes, as it were, and fasten the thread of the discourse around them. There will be *three* such stakes in this sermon. Who? Why? When?

I. Who?—This is the first stake. Who shall make up the assembly spoken of in the text? St. John answers the question: '*Small and great*'. In other words, he means the whole human family; all who have ever lived upon the earth.

When obscure people mingle in a crowd they generally escape observation. No one seems to notice them, or to care about them. Not so at the day of final account.

'*Small and great*'. Children will be there, children of the rich and of the poor; children of the wise and of the ignorant; children of the good and of the bad.

The '*small*,' no matter how humble or insignificant—none will be able to hide from God's sight.

I once saw a poor, friendless woman carrying the coffin of her own little babe to the potter's field. I knew not who she was, and I doubt whether her child ever had any name at all. Not a person in

town gave a single thought to the circumstance. The neglected woman had *one* person in the procession—for I turned about and went with her, and offered a prayer over the lowly grave. When the trump of the second Advent shall sound, even that poor, unknown child shall stand up before God.

The '*great*,' also, will be there. Just think, for a moment, of all the wonderful men you ever read or heard of: some of them so grand and powerful that it seems incredible that any Being would be able to control them. Cæsar, with his insatiable ambition; Xerxes, casting fetters into the sea to curb its rage; Alexander the Great, lamenting that there was only one world for him to conquer; Bonaparte, with hands folded behind his back, and strutting up and down, impatient at the least opposition or restraint; Wellington, the mighty hero of his age, who went down to his grave crowned with laurels which will be unfading so long as earthly glories last—great all these, in their way, but there is One far greater and mightier than they; even the King of kings, before whose judgment-seat '*small and great*' shall all appear.

II. Why?—St. John tells us in the text. It was a vision which he had of the terrible events of the judgment. '*The books were opened.*'

Do you ask 'what books?' I answer, God's *account-books*.

You have often noticed the large books in which merchants write down the amount which people owe them. Ah! how fast such columns of debts count up! Just so the Almighty is represented as keeping a record of the deeds which we are doing now. He has what business men call a *debtor* and a *credit* account. If you have a doubt of this, listen to what our Blessed Saviour says concerning it: 'When the Son of Man shall come in His glory; and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.'

Turning with a gracious welcome to those on His right hand, He will bid them enter upon the blessedness of His kingdom, assigning as the reason for the favour thus shown them, the faithful records in the book of His remembrance. Every time that His believing people had fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the prisoners, or bestowed even a cup of cold water on a suffering disciple, out of love to the Master, they were really rendering service unto Him.

I must beg you to read the grand passage for yourselves in the *twenty-fifth* chapter of St. Matthew, from the thirty-first verse to the end.

St. Paul tells us, in plain words, that 'Every one of us shall give account of himself to God' (Rom. xiv. 12).

The '*great*' must do it, no matter how high they may have held their haughty heads, and snubbed those below them; and laughed at goodness; and made a mock at sin; and joked about death; they must all stand up to be judged.

And remember, it will be no general outline of



what they have been about which will satisfy the Judge. I say a *general outline*, because this would present no correct view of the case. A father, we will suppose, has been absent from home for some time, and when he comes back he calls his little son to him, and asks, 'Have you been a good boy? and ought I to give you the present which I promised you, in case you obeyed your mother, and behaved properly to your sisters, and others about you?'

Very likely the little fellow will answer out boldly, 'Yes,' and be sincere in the belief that he is telling the truth.

We will grant that in the main he has done tolerably well; but, alas! some things have escaped his memory which ought to be taken into the account. He has quite forgotten the time that he threw stones at the crazy woman; and the sugar which he stole from the pantry; and his thoughtless cruelty in fastening a rope across the foot-path, one dark night, to trip up anybody who might be passing along. All these wrong things have been forgotten, and he looks back upon the weeks of his father's absence as having been spent very properly—and the father, in all likelihood, will never be the wiser. Not so when the All-seeing One calls small and great to give in their account.

III. When?—This was the third stake we drove down at the opening of the sermon. When will small and great stand before God, and the books be opened? Much sooner than we think. Aye, it will be just when our minds are least occupied about it.

The day of judgment will be like any common day. The sun will rise as usual. The sky will be as blue and beautiful as ever, and the earth as calm and quiet. Men will be seen going to their labour in the field, or hurrying to their stores, and offices, and shops. Gay and frolicsome children, with satchels of books, and bags of marbles, will be wending their way to school. Stages and railroad cars, and steamboats will all be in motion; millions of letters and papers on the way to those who will never have time to open them. Lawyers entering the door of the court-house, who will have no more causes to plead; frivolous and fashionable people will be hurrying their tailors and milliners for finery which they will never put on; sharp speculators will be planning some new insurance company, or some tempting arrangement of city lots in a distant State still covered with its primeval forest, to empty the pockets of the credulous; some jolly, blustering souls, red and swollen with hard drinking, will be swearing shocking oaths; when suddenly a fearful blast of a trumpet will be heard which will arouse even the dead from their graves, and the business, and folly, and wickedness of living men will stop, and the Lord Jesus Christ will take His place on the throne of judgment, and the books will be opened.—JOHN N. NORRIS, *Milk and Honey*, p. 9.

### WINNING WORDS OF WELCOME

'Take the water of life freely.'—REVELATION XXII. 17.

THE testimony of Mr. Joseph Hart, the hymn writer in the last century, was very striking, and will be helpful to us. 'Joseph Hart was, by the free and sovereign grace and Spirit of God, raised up from the depths of sin and delivered from the bonds of mere profession and self-righteousness, and led to rest entirely for salvation in the finished atonement and perfect obedience of Christ.'

O! bring no price;  
God's grace is free  
To Paul, to Magdalene, to me.

There are seven wonderful W's in this verse, and if we place one word on each day of the week the *Little Folks* will remember them. We have the—

- I. **Witnesses.**—The Spirit and the Bride (Rev. XXII. 17).
- II. **Want.**—Thirst (Matt. v. 6).
- III. **Word.**—Come (Matt. xi. 28).
- IV. **Whosoever.**—All (Acts xiii. 39).
- V. **Willingness.**—Take (Ps. cxvi. 13).
- VI. **Water.**—Life (John iv. 14).
- VII. **Welcome.**—Freely (Is. lv. 1).

Mercy is welcome news indeed  
To those who guilty stand;  
Sinners who feel what help they need  
Will bless the helping hand.

—CHARLES EDWARDS, *Tin Tacks for Tiny Folks*, p. 97.

### THE LOVING 'COME!'

'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'—REVELATION XXII. 17.

God is very fond of the word 'Come!' I have been trying to count in the Bible how many times God says 'Come'. I have found a great many. I wonder how many you could find. Very many times God says to us 'Come!' I believe that the very first word—as far as we know—that was ever said in all the world, was 'Come!'

Can you think of what I am thinking of? It is something in the fortieth Psalm. It is about Jesus Christ, and He is speaking of some time, it may have been millions and millions of years ago, 'Then said I, Lo, I come'. That was before the world was made. 'Then said I, Lo, I come.'

I think it is perhaps the oldest word we ever read of, 'Come! come!'

When we say 'Come' our 'Come' is the echo of God saying 'Come!' Do you know what an echo is? Did you ever hear an echo? Did you ever stand before a large rock, or a large building, and say something, and then find the sound come back to you? You might stand before a large rock, and say 'Come!' and it repeats 'Come! come!' God says 'Come!' then you say 'Come!' It is the echo. We are echoing God. All we can do is to echo God.

There are two beautiful echoes in the Bible. One is in the twenty-seventh Psalm and the eighth verse. 'When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' 'Seek!' 'seek!' Thou saidst, 'Seek My face!' I echo, 'Thy face will I seek!'

I will tell you of another beautiful echo, it is almost the last verse in the Bible; it is the last verse but one in the last chapter of the Revelation. Jesus saith, 'Surely I come quickly'. Then the echo, 'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' 'Come!' 'come!' We echo it. God says, 'I come!' We say, 'Come, Lord, come!'

There are three very beautiful 'Comes' in the Bible. I should like you to look at each. One is to wicked people. It is in Isaiah i. 18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.' That is a 'Come' to the wicked.

Now there is a 'Come' to the good, to those who have come to God, and who love Him, and have got their troubles and their sorrows; they feel their sins and they are unhappy. It is what Christ says to them; it is to those who are weary and heavy laden! Do you remember the passage? it is in the eleventh of St. Matthew and the twenty-eighth verse: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'.

Then there is a third 'Come' which He will say at the last day, the day of judgment, to His people, to those on His right hand; it is in Matthew xxv. 34, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

There are three beautiful 'comes'. A 'come' to the wicked; they come; then when they have come, a 'come' to them in their trouble; then when all is over God calls them to heaven. 'Come, and inherit the kingdom.' Whoever you are, you may 'come'. If you are a wicked one, there is a 'Come' to you; if you are a Christian in trouble, there is a 'come' to you; if you are dying there is a 'come' to you—'Come to heaven!' Three 'comes'.

I want to speak a little about the advents: the comings. Do you know how many there are, how many advents?

I. There is one now. I will tell you what I mean. You will understand me better if you look at Revelation ii. 20. Will you read it with me? 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me.' Then Jesus stands at the door, and knocks, and speaks; and if anyone listens, and opens the door, and lets Him in, He will come and sup with that one. He is standing at the door now; He is speaking now. Let us try if we can hear Him. Can you hear Him? Listen—in your heart—can you hear Him. Is there anything in your heart which seems to say, 'Come in to me!' I think I hear it. 'He stands at the door, and

knocks.' He speaks! He wants to come in. Will you let Him come?

Little Caroline's mother was showing little Caroline a picture, and the picture was Jesus with a little baby in His arms; and there were a great many mothers all around Him, and they were pushing forward their little boys and girls to go to Jesus. That was the picture. Little Carrie said, 'Mother! I should not want to be pushed. I would go without pushing.' Will you go to Jesus without pushing?

Jesus comes now, and 'knocks at our door,' and says, 'Let Me in!' and if we let Him in now, He will make us so happy; we shall like to have Him in our heart always after that.

II. Now I am going to speak of another advent—what is called *The Second Advent*. We generally mean by that when Jesus shall come again in His glory to judge the world. I am not quite sure whether that is the second advent, but we generally call it so. I think when the Holy Ghost came down, that was Christ's second coming, because He called it so—'I will come to you'. And when He 'comes' to our hearts that is another 'coming'; but we will call it 'the second coming' when Jesus comes again. We'll think a little about that.

Which would you rather—die before He comes, and go to heaven that way? or would you rather live on till He comes, and be found here living when He comes? which would you rather? Which is best? To put it into the language of the Creed, would you rather be one of 'the quick' or one of 'the dead'? 'The quick' means those who are alive when He comes; 'the dead' those who die before He comes. Which would you rather? Be alive when He comes? It is a very very happy thing to die. If we love Jesus it is an exceedingly happy thing to die!

I have read of a painter who was painting 'Death,' and the stupid fellow painted Death—as we generally see Death painted—a skeleton and a scythe! That is a horrid way of painting it! A skeleton—to show only our bones will be left, our flesh will go; and the scythe, to show as we cut down the grass, so we are all cut down. A good man coming by said, 'That is not the way to paint Death: you should paint him a beautiful bright angel with a golden key in his hand to open the door and let us into heaven.' That's death. It is a very happy thing to die.

When Bishop Beveridge was dying that good man said, 'If this be dying, I wish I could die for ever'. It is so happy.

But I think to be here on earth when Jesus Christ comes will be happier. One reason why I think so, is, because we know that then there will be no parting. When we come to die it will be very happy to be going to heaven, and to be with Him, and with those we love who have gone before, and all the angels, and so on; but then there will be some still in the body whom we shall have to leave, so we cannot be perfectly happy at that moment, as we should be leaving some behind us.

A lady who was dying a little time ago, said, 'I

think going to heaven is something like when I left school for good. I was very happy to come home; but it was rather a trial to leave those I loved, my companions, behind me. That is something like dying. It is very happy, but I have got so many to leave behind me.

But when Jesus Christ comes there will be no partings. We shall all go together then.

When Demosthenes was expelled from Greece, and when Tully was expelled from Italy many years afterwards, we read they both did the same thing in their banishment—they were continually going out looking toward their own native country. They could not see it, it lay far across the sea. Tears ran down their faces as they thought of their dear native country.

Should not we be thinking of the land from which we have been banished?—the beautiful world it will be then, the beautiful garden from which Adam and Eve were turned out! And our own home, our beautiful land, shall not we turn to think about it?

A little girl I read of had been talking to her mother, and her mother had been talking to her about heaven, and the little girl looked at the picture of an angel on the wall, and said to her mother, 'Mother! when shall I get my wings?'

'When shall I get my wings?' When will you get your wings? You will have 'wings' some day, or something like them, and go about flying away from star to star, flying amongst the stars perhaps, I do not know. But when shall I get my wings to soar away? Think of it. Are you ready? Are you ready for it?

A nobleman had 'a fool' in his household, as noblemen used to have in olden times in their service; these half fools, or those who pretended to be such, oftentimes were very clever men, and said very odd and witty things.

This nobleman gave his fool a stick, and said to him, 'Keep this stick till you can find a greater fool than yourself. When you have found one, give this stick to him.'

A long time passed on, the nobleman became very sick, and he said to his fool, 'Fool, I am going into a far country'. 'Are you, my lord?' asked the fool. 'Yes, I am,' replied the nobleman. 'And when shall you come back, my lord?' asked the fool again. 'Never!' was the reply. '*Never come back!*' Then what preparation have you made for yourself in that land, my lord, whither you are going?' 'None!' was the reply. 'Take the stick, my lord,' said the fool, 'You are a greater fool than anybody I know. Going into a far country, and made no preparation for the journey you are going to perform.'

Who could be a greater fool than that nobleman? Now be prepared! Quite seriously I ask you, 'Have you got your ticket?' There is a ticket necessary for the journey. *Have you got your ticket?* You cannot get into heaven without a ticket. Do you know where it says so? I will tell you what the ticket is. It is 'the white stone, with the new name

written on it, which no man knows, saving he who receives it' (Rev. ii. 17). Ask God to show you what it means. I believe it means something like this.

Amongst the Greeks when anybody was tried, if acquitted, he had 'the white stone'. Also, 'the white stone' was used as a ticket to admit to a feast. You must have your ticket.

And you must be *dressed* for the heavenly banquet. There is a particular dress required. You must have your dress on. I will tell you what it is. It is a white dress. You must have on a white dress. It says so in the Bible. Do you know what it is? What is the white dress you must have on? The righteousness of Jesus. You must be in Jesus, Jesus must be all to you; you must be covered with Jesus; your sins must be covered. Just as if you were to put a beautiful robe around a person in rags and tatters, and you do not see their poverty, so if the robe of Christ is on you, God does not see your rags and tatters. Have you got on your dress? Is your ticket ready? Then you will be ready to go in at any moment.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

### THE FIVE 'COMES'

'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'—REVELATION XXII. 20.

You all know that this is Advent Sunday, and I think you all know what the word 'advent' means, that it means 'coming'. Therefore we might call it 'Come-Sunday'. I am very glad (aren't you?) that there is *no 'Go-away Sunday!'* What a dreadful thing it would be if, instead of 'Come-Sunday,' there were 'Go-away Sunday'. We hope some day there will be! I do not suppose it will be a Sunday, but there may come a day which will be 'Go-away'. 'Go-away!' I hope that won't be said to any of us here, 'Go away!' *Now it is 'Come-Sunday!' 'Come!' 'COME!'*

If you love Jesus, you will love advent; but if you don't care about Jesus, you won't care about advent. Do you care about Jesus?

About six hundred years ago there lived in Italy a very wise, good man; his name was Thomas Aquinas. He wrote some very beautiful books, and when some one said to him, 'Where did you get all that eloquence to speak so beautifully, and to write such beautiful books?' what do you think he said? He replied, 'I got it all from the Cross'. Now, I do not think that you will understand that. Why did he say, 'I got it all from the Cross'? Think of it, boys and girls at school, where this great man got all his learning. He wrote a beautiful book, called *The Sacrament of the Altar*, and when he had finished the book he went to a church, and when there, he heard or thought he heard, Christ say to him, 'You have written very well. I will give you now anything you ask because you have written so well about Me.'

Thomas Aquinas said, 'Lord, give me Thyself, I want nothing else'. If you love Jesus, you will love advent.



Now I want to tell of Five Beautiful 'Comings,' and then, when I have told you of all the five, I shall ask you which you like best. Will you be ready, please, to tell me which you like best of 'The Five Comings' that I am going to tell you of?

I. I shall call the first *the Grand 'Come!'* You will find it in the fortieth Psalm, and the seventh verse: 'Then said I, *Lo, I Come!*' Jesus said it when He was up in heaven. 'Then.' When, I do not know. Thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago. 'Then said I, *Lo, I come!*'

Jesus was up in heaven, and He saw that we were going to be in this world, and He saw that we should be unhappy, because we were lost; and He saw that there would be a great many sacrifices, but they would not do any good, and the poor people would not be able to save themselves and help themselves; so He said to God the Father—He said it then, 'Then said I, *Lo, I come.* I will go and save them. I will go to that world and save them. I will go. How the angels must have wondered! I should think there was a perfect silence. I should think all heaven was silent when the Son of God said, 'I will go to that world'. 'Lo, I come!'

I am so glad He came. He might have had us all up in heaven without coming here first. Then we should not have had Him as a little baby in a cradle. Then we should not have had Jesus as the boy of twelve years old, or the young man as the pattern for us. It was so kind that He said, 'Lo, I come!'—better than if He did it all up in heaven.

II. Now, the next 'Come' I will call the *Gracious 'Come!'* It is in the first chapter of Isaiah, and the eighteenth verse: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Now, stop! Perhaps there is a boy or girl in this church who has been naughty—who knows that he or she has done something very wrong. I don't know what it is. You know. God knows. Now, God sends me to you, my dear child, this day, and the message God gives to you is this: 'Come now, and let us talk about it. Come now, and let us reason about it. You have been very naughty, and you cannot be happy. Come to Me!' God says, 'Listen to Me. I am willing to forgive you. And though your sins be as red as scarlet, though they make you blush, though you know all the waters in the world cannot wash them out, I will do it. Come to Me—really come to Me. Let us reason together about it. I will pardon all. I will forgive all, and you shall have peace!' That is God's message to the lost child. Do not think that when you come, God will not receive you. Do you only 'come'.

III. Now I must give you a third 'Come,' and that is a *Tender 'Come'*. It is in Matthew xi. 28: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'. Now, I may be speaking to some boy who is very tired, tired in a great many ways. I do not suppose he is yet very tired of this

life, though life is very hard work, and some little boys even have said, 'I am tired of my life'. It is not so with you, perhaps. But possibly you are tired with your work or your lessons; perhaps somebody is teasing you very much; perhaps you have some burden on your mind, something you are always thinking of, so you are always 'weary and heavy laden'. Now Jesus says to you, by me, 'Come to Me, with that poor, tired, burdened feeling—*come to Me, and I will give you rest*'. It is so tender. Have you had a tender mother? He is more tender. 'A mother may forget.' *He will never forget!*

Now, when you are in trouble, say, 'Jesus!' You need say no more; if you do not say any more, it will do. Don't say it as that poor woman first did, 'Jesus!' but with all your heart and soul, with loving tears, if you can, say, 'Jesus!' You try, and you will find that that will do it all. Say, 'Jesus!' lovingly.

IV. Now I come to my fourth 'Come,' and I will call it *the Echoing 'Come!'* You will find it at the end of the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation, the chapter we read, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus'. That is *the echoing 'come!'* because it is man saying it back to God. God said, 'Come now!' and man says back to God, 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

There was a little boy who had a little room—a little bedroom to himself. It looked toward the east, where the sun rises, and this little boy, almost immediately he got out of his bed in the morning, before he took off his nightshirt, used to run to the window and open it, and look out of the window. And why do you think he did this? *To see whether Jesus was coming!* He had heard that Jesus was coming from the east—and I think He will. And this little boy loved Jesus, and longed for Him to come, so he was always looking for His advent.

V. Now I come to my fifth and last 'Come,' that I shall call *the Crowning 'Come!'* You will find it in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew: '*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!*' Oh, what a glorious 'come' that will be! Do you ever think of Jesus coming? Do you think He will be *alone*? No. Do you know anybody who has gone to heaven—any dear friends, relations, or anybody else? I will tell you what it will be when Jesus comes. They will come with Him; you will see them. It says so in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the Thessalonians: 'Them also which sleep in Jesus'—the good ones who are gone to Jesus—God will take, and 'bring *with Him*'. Whenever you read that verse always pay great attention to the last words, 'with Him'—Him, *not God*, but Jesus. God will 'bring *with Jesus!*' 'With Him!' That is, when Jesus comes, God will take care those dear ones gone to heaven will come 'with Him'. If you are there, you will see them.

Shall we say there are three great comings of Christ to us, and three comings of us to Christ? I think we may. What are they? When He was

born at Bethlehem. That was a great coming! Then, He is coming *now*; He is coming at this moment. It is not I who say it, but God says it, to you, through me. He is always coming to the heart, coming now. And then He will come by and by in His glorious advent. That is the last. And I think we may have three comings. We come now. Will you come now? Jesus is knocking at the door, won't you let Him in? Only try. He is coming to

your hearts. Love Him; and let Him in. Well, then, presently, you will die; that will be coming to Jesus. I hope you will go to 'sleep in Jesus'. Then, at the last day, when He comes in His glory, you will rise from your grave, and will go to Him; then you will be caught up to meet that beautiful assembly, that grand procession, all with their palms, their music, their beauty, and their glory. You will be caught up to go in with them to heaven.—JAMES VAUGHAN.

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